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[A VILLANOUS PROPOSAL.]

REGINALD'S FORTUNE.

CHAPTER V.

Folly may be in youth:
But many times 'tis mixt with grave discretion
That tempts it to use, and makes its judgment
Equal if not exceeding that which palls
Have almost shaken into a disease.

Nodd.

WHEN Reginald found himself alone in the dimly lighted sale-room of his uncle's establishment he did not retire to his own chilling chamber, as Mr. Hutchley had recommended. The air of the sale-room was pleasantly warm, and even the grim shadows that filled the corners beyond the range of the light were more endurable than the comfortless, fireless room above. Seating himself on a low stool, the lad endeavoured to realize the singular events of that, to him, eventful day.

He had partaken of a luxurious breakfast as the peated and courted heir to a large fortune; but had bought his dinner at a restaurant as the ill-paid clerk of his uncle, and evening had now found him as the sole occupant of his uncle's business house—friendless and alone.

Reginald was no coward, but he could not help feeling it cruel in his relatives to leave him in his present lodgings, without anyone to share his solitude or care for him if he were ill. With a sigh, he remembered how all his previous evenings had been spent in pleasant companionship, with lights and music, and by a glowing fireside.

Leaving himself and the, to him, inexplicable change in his fortunes, his thoughts turned to Willa with a strange, yearning tenderness. He wondered what reception she had met with on her return home, and if she were thinking of him at that moment, and the thought of her brought balm to his wounded heart.

For some time he remained absorbed in his meditations, but was at length aroused to his present circumstances by an indication of return'ing appetite, and he suddenly remembered that it was now his usual dinner hour.

"I suppose they are dining now at my uncle's," he said, half aloud; "that is, if he has reached home yet. Strange, uncle said nothing about my getting anything. Perhaps, though, he thought I should not need to be told."

He arose, put on his great-coat and muffled himself closely, set the lantern on the counter, and then started out in search of a supper, his dinner having been eaten some hours before. He was careful to lock the door behind him and put the key in his pocket, and he then proceeded along the street with a strange feeling of independence.

The restaurant where he had purchased his dinner was well lighted, and the lad entered it, ordered a hot supper, and devoted himself to it with a keen relish.

The repast over, he took a brisk walk of half an hour's duration, and then returned to his lodgings.

The sale-room did not look more cheerful than before, but the lad felt stronger in spirits as well as in body, and welcomed its genial warmth after the bitter cold of the street.

He had scarcely resumed his seat on the stool when he was disturbed by a loud knocking at the door, a knocking which announced the arrival of his trunk.

The porter carried it up to Reginald's room, waited a few moments in the sale-room to warm his hands, and then departed. The lad took out a couple of his favourite books, returned to his comfortable seat, and tried to read, but the words seemed blurred, and his thoughts wandered to other subjects, so that he soon gave up the attempt in despair.

He felt an increased sense of manliness in his present position, and also an unwonted seriousness, a gravity beyond his years.

He realized that his future depended upon himself, that if he yielded feebly to the force of circumstances he might soon find his grave, but if he were bold and resolute, improving every opportunity, he might grow in health and wisdom, and eventually gain possession of the fortune of which he believed himself about to be defrauded.

With this view, he marked out a very sensible course of action for himself. As his duties would

confine him closely to the desk, it would be necessary for him to take a certain amount of out-door exercise, regardless of the weather. So much for bodily health.

His course of reading must be thorough, and such as to strengthen and inform his mind, and the lad had sufficient wisdom to see that it ought to be varied with works of fiction, or it would soon pall upon his mental tastes.

Having marked out his future, he counted his money, and put Willa's little bag round his neck, without opening it, resolving anew that its contents should be preserved for her use, as her mother had intended.

The evening dragged wearily along. He looked at his watch a dozen times, and listened to its ticking, thinking it must have stopped, and at length concluded that he was weary enough to go to bed.

He put off doing so as long as possible, dreading the change of air between his present quarters and his chamber, but his fears eventually developed a happy idea, which he hastened to put into execution.

Hastening up to his room, he brought down a mattress and bed-coverings, deposited them in order upon the counter, making a very comfortable couch, into which he soon crept, smiling at his ingenious device. In a few minutes he was soundly asleep.

It was about that time that Mr. Reid Westcourt, sitting in his back drawing-room, by his fire-side, said to his wife:

"Really, Isabella, the cold is intense. Please to ring for more coal."

Mrs. Westcourt obeyed the injunction, the bell-pull being at her elbow, and after the fire had been reprieved, the merchant resumed:

"This must be a long evening to Reginald. I dare say he has gone to bed long before this. I wonder if he feels the change in his position. Physically he will, for he will probably be too hoarse in the morning to speak!"

A half-remorseful expression flitted over Mrs. Westcourt's face, and she drew her chair nearer her husband's as she said:

"I wish, Reid, that we could get along without doing this thing. A cold will surely kill him."



"Well, what if it does?" responded the merchant, somewhat uneasily. "He's only a puny boy who would die anyway in the course of a few years. I shall not injure him—only allow events to take their course. Before long," he added, with a smile, "we shall be as rich as you can desire!"

"I hope so!" said Mrs. Westcourt, endeavouring to stifle the stings of conscience. "But, Reid, isn't it a bad idea to put the lad into your business place to 'sleep all alone?' He might set the building on fire!"

The merchant looked thoughtful, but made no reply, except by a singular and incomprehensible smile.

"I believe he has suspicions in regard to his fortune," resumed the lady, not noticing her husband's silence. "He went off as coldly as though he had simply made us a morning call. He did not even kiss Oriana, nor seem sorry to part with her. I believe he cares more for Willa than for anyone else in the world."

"Well, he won't care for anyone long," said the merchant, leaning back in his chair. "How pleasant the fire seems such a night as this. I believe I'll take a little nap, Isabella, before supper."

He closed his eyes in his usual after-dinner style, and Mrs. Westcourt took up some elaborate crochet work, the couple thus forming a very pretty picture of domestic happiness and ease.

Reginald slept well and awoke at an early hour on the following morning, restored his bed to its appropriate place, made his toilet, in the warm sun-room, and concluded that, on the whole, he felt better than usual.

He was barely dressed when the porter made his appearance to put the place in order, and to replenish the fire; Reginald then seized that opportunity of getting his breakfast.

Mr. Hutchley was the first to arrive, but the clerks soon followed, and proceeded about their respective duties. The manager made some kind inquiries of the lad as to his night's rest, and then set him to work at copying.

Mr. Reid Westcourt arrived a little earlier than usual that morning, and scrutinized his nephew closely before addressing him. There was a healthful glow about the lad's cheeks which he could not understand, but which he believed to be anything rather than a hectic flush, and his eyes had a natural brightness instead of the glassiness his uncle had expected.

"Good morning, nephew," said the merchant, at length. "Did you sleep well last night?"

Reginald looked up with a start, having been too much absorbed in his new occupation to notice his relative's arrival, but he replied, quietly:

"Thank you, uncle, I slept very well."

Mr. Westcourt noticed with disappointment that the lad's voice was not at all hoarse, and that he had no cold whatever.

Reginald resumed his work, and his uncle turned away, going to his own desk.

The lad's day passed slowly away in hard labour, varied by the nourishing meal he provided himself, but he continued cheerful, making no complaints. His uncle's keen gaze noticed that he grew pale in the afternoon from confinement and overwork, and from this indication the merchant augured well for the success of his schemes.

"Reginald," said Mr. Westcourt, as he prepared to return home, "here is your pay for this week. I give it you in advance. I must repeat, be careful not to run into debt."

As he gave the injunction, he handed his nephew a few pieces of silver, which the latter put in his pocket, resuming his work.

Mr. Hutchley, who was present at the moment, and who viewed the scene with much interest, believed that Mr. Westcourt desired to make a business man of his nephew, and that the small salary paid was to teach the lad habits of economy and business. With this idea, he felt a most cordial admiration for the Spartan affection of the uncle, and this admiration was made known in his looks and manner to the merchant.

"Mr. Reginald takes kindly to business, sir," he said when Mr. Westcourt had finished locking his desk. "I think he looks healthier already."

"I hope he will make a worthy successor when I shall have retired from trade, Hutchley," returned the merchant, skilfully disguising the annoyance he felt at the manager's remark.

"I hope he will, sir," said Hutchley, earnestly. "Small as his fortune now is, I presume he will be a treasure to you, sir."

Mr. Westcourt glanced quickly at his nephew, remembering that he had informed him that he was entirely penniless; but the lad did not look up or appear to have heard Hutchley's words.

Yet he had heard them, and they had caused a great commotion in his soul.

He had been told that he had nothing, and now it seemed that something remained to him. His reason suggested to him the real truth with stronger force than ever before, and he again resolved, with bitter emphasis, to regain every penny of his fortune in due time.

The merchant found relief in believing that the words had escaped Reginald's hearing, and he answered:

"I hope he will, Hutchley—I hope he will. Time will tell, however. Just look over the lad's work and see that it's done well!"

By the time the task had been duly scanned and pronounced correct, Mr. Reid Westcourt had departed for his residence.

In due time the clerks also departed, and Reginald was left alone with the manager.

"Sit down, Mr. Reginald," said Mr. Hutchley, pointing to the stuffed leather-covered chair in a little while. I should think a young gentleman like counting-house. "If you don't mind, I'll stay with you you would feel rather lonely here!"

"I was lonely last night," replied the lad, taking the proffered seat, and uttering a sigh. "I'm not used to this sort of thing, you know. Sit down, Mr. Hutchley!"

The manager complied, and remarked:

"Of course, Mr. Reginald, you know that your uncle would not leave you here alone only because you might take cold going to his house every night and back every morning?"

Reginald was silent, preferring not to disturb the faith of the little manager in his employer, and possibly realizing that the task would be very difficult.

"You are not discontented, I hope, Mr. Reginald?" continued Mr. Hutchley, not comprehending his companion's silence.

"No—not discontented," was the reply, "but I'm not satisfied. I'd rather not talk of myself, Mr. Hutchley, for I'm not at all happy!"

"Poor lad!" ejaculated the manager, in unaffected grief at this revelation. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Reginald. Shall we talk of my son? You have seen Jason?"

"Yes, I saw him once here, I believe. He is a very studious boy, is he not?"

Mr. Hutchley's countenance beamed with paternal pride, as he hastened to reply:

"Studious? He's the head boy in his school! What he doesn't know in Latin and Greek I wouldn't give much for! I was going to try and get him into our business house, sir, but he has such a turn for books and arguing that I'm going to educate him for a profession—the law, I think. It'll cost a mint of money to put him through, but I don't begrudge him a penny of it! Mark my words, Mr. Reginald, you'll hear the name of Hutchley one of these days in connection with some great lawyer!"

Reginald was aware that this son was Mr. Hutchley's idol, and he listened sympathetically to the fond father's praises, feeling his own friendless condition the more keenly by force of contrast.

He absolutely banished all thoughts of himself, however, and endeavoured to become agreeable to his companion; but there was a sadness in his countenance that the good little manager did not fail to notice.

"Bless my soul, Mr. Reginald, how I'm running on!" he exclaimed. "I don't live far from here, but I should like you to go home with me to tea. The place isn't good enough, I know—"

"Oh, yes, it is!" cried Reginald, pleased at the thought of any change. "I would like very much to go home with you, Mr. Hutchley—it's so lonely here!"

The manager seemed to repent of his invitation, but the lad's last sentence decided him to renew it, although with many deprecating remarks about his lodgings.

Reginald hastened to attire himself for the street, and Mr. Hutchley more slowly followed his example. The lantern was then placed on the counter, out of harm's way, and the couple left the warehouse, the lad secretly locking the door behind them.

"I'm sure I don't know what your uncle will say, Mr. Reginald!" said the manager, irresolutely, when they found themselves in the street. "He doesn't know exactly what apartments I have, you see!"

"Oh, I'm only a clerk now to him," responded Reginald. "I shan't say anything to him about it!"

"But wouldn't that be deceiving the head?" asked the manager, "the head" being his usual designation for the head of the establishment, Mr. Westcourt.

Reginald hastened to reassure him, and they continued their route in silence.

At length Mr. Hutchley paused before a pastry-cook's shop, as if undecided what to do, then with more resolution drew a latch-key from his pocket, unlocked the private door, admitting Reginald into a dimly lighted hall.

He then conducted him up a couple of flights of

stairs to a large back chamber, where he hastened to strike a light.

"Here we are, Mr. Reginald," he said. "Take a seat, sir. This is my home—such as it is!"

Reginald seated himself, and glanced around the room.

It was rather neatly furnished, and contained some shelves of books, a small cabinet of minerals, but had a lodging-house sort of look that was not pleasant.

The fire was laid in the grate ready for lighting, and the same match that did duty in lighting the candle was applied to the contents of the grate with good result.

The fire soon sparkled and crackled in an enlivening manner, giving the room a more cheerful look.

"It'll soon be warm now," said the manager, rubbing his hands. "If I had thought of your coming home with me, Mr. Reginald, I would have had it lighted before our arrival."

As the coals ignited, Mr. Hutchley set upon them a small tin tea-kettle which had been resting upon the hob, and drew his seat nearer to Reginald and the fire.

In process of time a cloud of steam poured from the spout of the kettle, and Mr. Hutchley, intent upon hospitality, arose, brought from a cupboard an apothecary-looking brown-ware teapot, into which he slipped a teaspoonful of tea, remarking:

"I always make my own tea, Mr. Reginald. Land-ladies are so extravagant with other people's tea!"

As he made it and set on the table some slices of bread and butter, Reginald wondered how this bustling little housekeeper could be the same person as the stern, keen-eyed, astute manager of his uncle's business.

"Come, Mr. Reginald," said Mr. Hutchley, interrupting his thoughts. "I must apologize for the tea. If I had only foreseen—"

"Make no apologies, Mr. Hutchley," said the lad, quickly, taking his seat at the table.

Reginald was polite, as good-hearted people generally are; nevertheless, in his heart, he could not help wondering at the exceeding blandness of the repast, knowing that Mr. Hutchley was in receipt of a very liberal salary.

As if divining his thoughts, the manager remarked:

"I live rather frugally, Mr. Reginald, as I consider it good for the health. Besides, my son will need all the money he can get to begin his professional career with and to support him while afterwards."

Reginald comprehended that the father was half-starving himself to lay up money for the idolized son, and from that moment he felt a sort of veneration for the little manager.

The repast was necessarily brief, and Mr. Hutchley then exhibited his books, minerals, an old book full of his son's compositions written in a plain hand, a medal that he had received the previous year, and other treasures of similar character.

Their owner was highly gratified at the interest taken in them by Reginald, whom he finally declared to be worthy of his most excellent uncle.

"I think I had better go back now," said the lad, when he had seen and admired everything. "The fact is, Mr. Hutchley, I had my dinner at mid-day and feel the need of a little supper. Won't you come with me?"

"Dear me, Mr. Reginald," exclaimed his host. "Is it possible? And I have nothing in the cupboard."

Reginald interrupted his apologies by reiterating his invitation, and, after considerable hesitation, and wondering what the head would say, Mr. Hutchley consented, and they made their way to the restaurant.

There was a hungry look on the manager's face as they entered the establishment and inhaled the savoury odours, and the lad found delight in ordering such a repast as made his guest absolutely nervous.

"My dear Mr. Reginald," he said, catching his arm, "you know what the head said—no running in debt! I beg of you—consider how many half-crowns you are spending! Dear me! I never had such a supper in my life! Port wine, too; dear, dear!"

Reginald assured him that he would not be rendered bankrupt by the proposed expenditure, but was obliged to exhibit the contents of his purse before he could quiet the alarm of his guest.

Once convinced that the proposed meal would not impoverish his young host, and that it was to be no delusion, the good manager became restless and anxious for its appearance.

The lad could not resist a thrill of generous pity as he realized the self-denial of Mr. Hutchley, and mentally decided that a good repast had long been a stranger to his palate.

"I have a great taste for minerals, Mr. Reginald," said Mr. Hutchley, glancing over his shoulder to see if the waiter were coming. "and I flatter myself that my little cabinet contains some choice ones. You ordered oysters, I believe? Oysters are very rare now-a-days—Ah!"

The interjection was caused by the appearance of the waiter with the first course, and from that moment silence fell between the couple.

The repast was at length finished, and they continued their route to the warehouse, where the manager took leave of his young entertainer, expressing himself delighted with the treatment he had received, and then returned home, his heart full of warmth and grateful thoughts towards Reginald.

The lad, equally pleased, and feeling that he had conferred happiness upon a person whom he had believed too absorbed in business to feel such an emotion, entered the lonely sale-room, made his bed on the counter, and sank into happy slumbers.

CHAPTER. VI

But all in vain: no fort can be so strong,
No fleshly breast can arm'd be so sound,
But will at last be won by battery long,
Or unawares at disadvantage found:
Nothing is sure that grows on earthly ground.
And who most tries in arm of fleshly might,
And boasts in beauty's chain not to be bound,
Doth soonest fall in disadventurous fight,
And yields his earthly neck to victory's most despight.

Spenser.

The next morning Mr. Hutchley appeared the same Argus-eyed, astute manager as usual, moving about with his noiseless steps, keeping the clerks in the best of order, and Reginald, seeing him again in his business character, would almost have doubted the experiences of the previous evening but for the subdued kindness of manner exhibited towards him by the manager.

When Mr. Reid Westcourt made his appearance the clerks were busy at their respective duties: Reginald was engaged in copying, and Mr. Hutchley, who was book-keeper as well as general overseer, was also at Reginald's desk—properly his own—absorbed in abstruse calculations.

The proprietor greeted his subordinate with his unvarying politeness of manner, inquired after Reginald's health, noticed that he had no cough or hoarseness, and that he looked better than usual. He then passed to his own desk, where he busied himself some time in looking over his morning's pile of letters. When he had finished them he leaned his head upon his hand and became absorbed in thought, the result of which was that he at length summoned the manager to him.

"You don't look well, Hutchley," he observed, kindly; his gaze, however, resting upon his desk and not upon his assistant. "As there's not much doing now, suppose you take a holiday? You can visit your son, if you like, and see how he gets on."

"But can I be spared, sir?" returned the manager, full of gratitude. "The clerks need my eye, and—
"I will look after them," was the response. "Go and enjoy yourself, Hutchley, for a couple of days, and come back looking yourself again. As a token of my appreciation of your faithful services to my late grandfather and myself, I must be allowed to pay your travelling expenses."

He handed him a well-stuffed pocket-book, which the manager accepted with profuse thanks and with tearful eyes.

"Now be off, Hutchley," added the merchant, with a smile. "Take your son a little present from me. I shan't look for your return before the third day from this."

Overjoyed at the unexpected holiday, the liberal gift, and, more than all, at the thoughtful kindness of his employer, the little manager shook hands with the merchant, and made his adieux. He then hastened to Reginald, communicated his good fortune, and added, enthusiastically:

"Oh, Mr. Reginald, the head is the kindest, best gentleman in the world. And you are like him."

He wrung the lad's hand, said good-bye, and then hurried on his shabby great-coat, and departed to enter upon his well-earned holiday.

Mr. Westcourt appeared relieved by his departure, and repassed his letters, consulting his watch once or twice as he did so, as if he expected a call at an appointed hour. If so, he was not disappointed, for a gentleman was at length ushered into the counting-house, and the merchant arose to receive him.

From the conversation which ensued it was apparent that the visitor was a merchant from Manchester who had been recommended to Mr. Westcourt, and who wished to buy heavily on cash payments.

Ordinarily, it would have been Mr. Hutchley's duty to conduct such a sale, although the proprietor not unfrequently acted as salesman himself to favoured customers.

On the present occasion he did so, conducting his visitor into the outer room, exhibiting his goods, and conversing in so low a tone as to be inaudible to the clerks.

The result was favourable. He made a heavy sale,

received in return a cheque for a large sum of money, and ordered the goods to be immediately despatched to their destination.

This visitor had scarcely gone when there came another, a West-end merchant, who had been for many years a regular customer of Mr. Westcourt. He also bought largely, paying part money and giving his note for the remainder.

Mr. Westcourt did not rest until the goods were sent to their new owners, the clerks all joining in the packing, which was of some hours' duration.

At length they were despatched, and the merchant returned to his desk, where he gave himself up to thought.

"How fortunate!" he mused. "Two extensive sales, and at this dull season too! The goods are actually out of my house at this moment. Now if I could only arrange and carry out my scheme."

The scheme alluded to was evidently one that required great consideration, for he paced backwards and forwards with corrugated brows, quite unheeding the presence of his nephew.

The result of his deliberations was that he stepped to the door dividing the counting-house and sale-room, and said, in a quick, sharp tone:

"Mr. Fennes will step here a moment."

The clerks raised their heads, glanced at each other apprehensively, as one of their number stepped forwards to obey the peremptory summons, and it was evident that they expected his dismissal.

Mr. Westcourt was not in the habit of summoning his *employés* to private interviews, and there were reasons soon to be explained why Mr. Fennes's discharge was to be apprehended.

The merchant led the way into the little room adjoining the counting-house, and thither the clerk followed him.

When they both gained its precincts Mr. Westcourt closed the door and gently locked it, motioning his companion to a seat, and taking one himself.

The room was warm and pleasant-looking, and bore the evidences of good cheer, as both Mr. Westcourt's customers of that morning had been treated to some of his favourite wine. Three or four empty bottles stood upon the top of an oaken cabinet, and from its lock dangled a bunch of keys.

The merchant had hardly seated himself when he arose, went to the cabinet, brought out a couple of bottles of wine and clean glasses, placed them on the table, and reseated himself.

The clerk had watched his employer's movements with a nervousness he could not conceal, but his brow now partially cleared and his manner became less fearful.

Wixon Fennes, for that was the name of the clerk, bore a prominent part in the history we are recording, and therefore merits an elaborate description.

He was about twenty-three years of age, tall and rather slender, and with a countenance that would have interested Lavater. The forehead lacked breadth, but was moderately high; the eyes were pale in hue, yet were not lacking in keenness and intelligence; the mouth showed habitual indecision as well as vacillation of character, yet altogether the smoothly shaven face was not unprepossessing. His light hair, almost flaxen in hue, his thin, faded eyebrows, and delicate complexion gave him a very boyish appearance.

With all his indications of weakness and irresolution, there was something about the face of Wixon Fennes that showed an aspiring nature, a desire to be wiser and better than he now was.

He was an orphan, and had been brought up by a relative who cared little for him, but considered he was doing well by the youth when he placed him in the house of Westcourt two years previous to the opening date of our story—particularly as Fennes, having had no restraining hand, had been very wild and fallen into evil company.

Since he had become a clerk he had greatly changed, forsaken his dissolute companions, and bade fair to become an honourable and respectable citizen. This change was not due to the influence of Mr. Westcourt, but to the fact that he had formed a devoted attachment for a young girl, who loved him in return, and whose influence over him was of the most elevating character.

Like his fellow-clerks and all the world, Wixon Fennes regarded his employer as a man of the most scrupulous integrity and the nicest honour; nevertheless, he had conceived a dislike for him, and had been frank enough on several occasions to declare it, in presence of Mr. Hutchley and some of the clerks.

It was on account of these unguarded and thoughtless expressions of aversion that he now expected dismissal, and the same reason was assigned by his fellow-clerks for his summons to the counting-house.

"You are a poor man, I believe, Fennes?" was the unexpected address of the merchant. "You have no money?"

"None whatever, sir," was the reply. "I haven't a penny except my salary from you!"

The merchant looked gratified at the intelligence, and said:

"It is as I thought. The relative who educated you and got you into my employment is dead, is he not?"

"He is, sir," answered Fennes, wondering at his employer's singular questions. "His annuity died with him, and he had nothing to leave even had he been inclined to bestow anything upon me."

"And the inclination was perhaps wanting, eh? I understand. You were wild and your relative was very strict. You are without friends?"

Fennes assented, with a weary sigh.

"It seems to me," pursued the merchant, keeping his gaze fixed upon the anxious, expectant face before him, "that I have heard the clerks joke you about some young lady. Are you engaged to be married?"

The clerk flushed and bowed, evidently desiring to say nothing on the subject.

"You had better be frank with me," said his employer. "I may have it in my power to assist you to marry. If you choose, I will assist you. I have a little business transaction on hand, which I may confide to you provided I am confident that you will do it well. Your remuneration shall be ample and your salary shall be increased so as to enable you to support a family."

Fennes's eyes sparkled with pleasure, and he forgot his dislike of his employer, as he exclaimed:

"Oh, sir, try me. I will do anything you desire for such a reward!"

"Anything?" repeated the merchant.

"Anything!" responded the clerk, earnestly. "I know well that Mr. Westcourt would ask nothing dishonorable of me!"

The merchant winced under this declaration, moved uneasily in his seat, and then said:

"Before we discuss my project let me understand how you are situated. Who is the young lady to whom you are engaged? What are her circumstances?"

The clerk's heart was warmed towards his employer by the interest displayed in his welfare, and by the promise to aid him to marry, and he hastened to reply:

"The young lady lives in the country, sir. She is an orphan, too, and lives with her guardian. She is well off, owns a cottage, and has thousand pounds in the bank. Our social position is about the same!"

"She has a thousand pounds?" repeated the merchant, in a disappointed tone.

"Yes, sir. Her father was prosperous while mine was unfortunate. Her father lived until recently while mine died young. We've loved each other for years, but she can't marry me. Her father's will was that she should not marry without the consent of her guardian, and her guardian refuses his consent, saying that the man that has Mary must have as much money as she has. And I shall be old before I can lay up a thousand pounds!"

"And you love her very much?"

"Love her—love Mary Hayward—oh, sir!"

The clerk's voice seemed choked with sudden emotion, but he soon continued, more quietly:

"It's for her sake, sir, I've left off my wild ways. She bids me be patient and hopeful, and I try to be so. She refused a rich farmer lately because she loved me, so I may well be hopeful. Oh, Mr. Westcourt," he added, with passionate earnestness, "if you would only assist Mary and me to marry, we would always bless you!"

A shadow passed over the merchant's face as he listened to the clerk's plea, and he seemed for a moment to relent in some purpose he had formed. The relenting was but momentary, and he replied, in his usual mild tones:

"Very well, Fennes. You can earn my assistance if you will. For a little service which I require at your hands, I will give you a thousand pounds down to match with Miss Hayward's little fortune, and I will also increase your present small salary to two hundred pounds a year!"

"A thousand pounds down! Two hundred a year!" exclaimed the clerk, in bewilderment.

The merchant repeated the assertion.

"But what can I do to earn such an amount? I must be dreaming—"

"Come nearer to me," said the merchant. "There, so! Now take a glass of wine and hear what I have to say to you."

He poured out the wine for his *employé*, watched him drink it, and then said, impressively:

"First, you must swear that not a word of the proposal I am about to make to you shall ever escape your lips. Swear!"

The clerk regarded his employer in amazement, appeared reassured at the sight of his calm countenance, and pronounced the required oath.

The merchant hesitated a moment, looked at his clerk searchingly, and then said:

"I have a very large insurance on my building and goods, Fennes, as perhaps you know."

"Yes," said the clerk, wonderingly.

"In fact," pursued his employer, slowly, and as if fearing to put his idea into words, "I have an insurance effected on more goods than are really here—a very large insurance! Then I—I sold a great deal this morning, only a trifles of which is down on the books. Now, suppose—simply suppose—the building were to take fire and be burned to the ground, why, I should make several thousand pounds by the operation. Do you understand?"

Fennes did begin to understand, as was evinced by the horrified gaze he fixed upon the merchant.

"In fact," continued Mr. Westcourt, more freely, now that the ice was fairly broken, "I should make quite a handsome fortune from such an opportunity. What do you think of such an accident, Fennes? Is it possible?"

"Oh, Mr. Westcourt," said the clerk, in a low, frightened tone. "You are surely joking! I thought you so very good, too! I—I don't know what to think—"

"It isn't necessary for you to think, my dear Fennes," responded the merchant, with assumed lightness. "Let me do the thinking. To return to our subject. We were talking of accidents, were we not? Suppose such an accident were to happen here, and this very building were to burn to the ground? In such a case I would give you a cheque—no, a thousand-pound note, and the increased salary I mentioned! What do you say?"

"Oh, no, no," said the clerk, shrinking before his employer. "I cannot! I cannot! I am not so bad, sir, as you think me. Perhaps," he added, brightening, "you are only trying me."

A glance at the merchant's face dispelled that illusion.

"Think the matter over, Fennes," said Mr. Westcourt, coolly. "I really can't take your denial."

The clerk's spirit and manliness flashed up under this remark. He drew his form erect, threw off his frightened manner, and said, indignant:

"Mr. Westcourt, I have never liked you, but I always deemed you the very soul of honour. No one, except yourself, could ever have convinced me to the contrary. I see you now as you are. I tell you, sir, that all your wealth cannot tempt me to this deed!"

He arose, as if to depart, but the merchant motioned him to his seat again, saying:

"Why, Fennes, what can be your objections? You make quite a bugbear out of a very ordinary little transaction. It would never be found out, and five minutes' work would secure your fortune."

"I will not do it, sir," replied Fennes, firmly. "I told you I was trying to be worthy of Mary, and so I am. You would tempt me to a crime—a crime which, if found out, would transport me to a penal colony. I should have thought you would have helped me to rise instead of dragging me down."

"I had no idea, Fennes, that you were such a very moral young man," said his employer, with a slight sneer. "You were not so two years ago when you signed the wrong name to an order for money."

Fennes, who had arisen, sank back in his chair as pale as death, and almost as lifeless.

"You see I know your whole history," resumed the merchant. "I had it from your relative, who deemed it his duty to tell me. I got back the order you forged, paying my own money for it, and have it yet. Talking of the penal colonies, it isn't too late for that scrap of paper to send you there."

"Oh, sir," faltered the clerk, imploringly, "have mercy upon me! I was led away at that time by evil companions. I believed that that paper was burned, and that I was free to commence a new life. Give it to me, and I will be your slave. It will kill Mary to think of my crime—"

"She need not know of it!" was the tempter's response. "I will give it to you with the thousand pounds!"

Fennes shuddered and covered his face with his hands.

"This—this 'accident' is no worse than forgery," said the merchant. "It can't be very wrong when I advise it. Does not all the world hold me up as a model man? You can begin your new life after you do this thing just as well!"

Crushed and bewildered, the clerk listened without replying.

"It's no worse than things which are done every day," continued his employer. "It can be managed so that it will never be found out. On the one hand, you get back your valuable paper, gain a thousand pounds, and a large salary; on the other, you have disgrace, transportation, and Mary's death!"

The clerk groaned in anguish.

"At least," he faltered, "I can tell of your temptation, of the cause of my disgrace."

"Who would believe you?"

The clerk again groaned, and a silence ensued between the two men.

During that pause there was a fierce struggle between good and evil in the sorely tempted heart of the youth.

The arguments on both sides of the case were presented to his own mind far more forcibly than they had been by the merchant.

The thoughts of Mary's grief, Mary's desolation, and Mary's death, when she should learn that he had been a forger and was to be transported, assisted the youth to finally triumph.

When he lifted his head, his fair, colourless face looked like that of a spectre, and there were dark lines about his eyes that evinced his fearful struggle.

"Well," he said, in a broken, dispirited way, "what is it to be done?"

"Say to-morrow night!" was the response. "It's best done while Mr. Hutchley is absent, as I do not want the extent of this morning's sales known. Take another glass of wine, Fennes!"

The clerk obeyed, drinking with recklessness as if he hoped to drown all thought or whispers of conscience.

"How shall I do it?" he asked.

"I leave the details to you!" was the response. "Only take care not to be discovered!"

"I will! But, Mr. Westcourt, your nephew sleeps here now. Won't it excite suspicion to bid him sleep elsewhere?"

"I have thought of that, Fennes, and he will continue to sleep here! It will be thought that his carelessness was the cause of any accident, you see!"

"True," said the clerk, with a look of relief. "But," he added, with sudden fear, "he might be suffocated or burnt!"

There was a gleam in Mr. Westcourt's eyes at that moment which, if the clerk had seen it, would have suggested that Reginald's death was a contingency in the proposed affair not unheeded. But the merchant replied, quietly enough:

"Oh, nonsense, Fennes. There'll soon be an alarm, of course, and he'll make his escape. His chamber is a front one, you know, and he'll get out easily enough. Then I may rely on you?"

The clerk uttered a subdued affirmative.

"Just think how happy you'll be next week," remarked the merchant, "when you go down to claim Mary. You can tell her and her guardian that I have heard your story, and desire to aid so deserving a young couple. I will give you a month's holiday for your bridal trip, and your salary shall go on just the same!"

Fennes's countenance lost something of its gloom as he listened to these assurances, and a look of resolution appeared, as he said:

"Yes, I'll do it. The guilt will be yours, not mine, Mr. Westcourt. I'll do it only in self-defence."

The merchant pressed him to take more wine, which he did, and soon after dismissed him to his duties in the sale-room, thinking exultantly of the triumph he had achieved over the young man's virtue.

"I shall make more money out of the affair than Fennes suspects," he mused, locking his cabinet.

(To be continued.)

SCIENCE.

FOUR tons of coal are estimated to be equal to twenty years of hard work.

OAKS generally furnish good timber when grown slowly on dry ground, whilst those from wet soil appear considerably spongy.

A NEW steam coal-whipping machine has been tried at Newcastle capable of drawing up and discharging a cargo of 940 tons of coal in eight hours.

A COMPANY has been formed in California for the purpose of digging a tunnel in the Sierra Nevada mountains, and through it conveying the clear waters of Lake Tahoe to the channel of a stream, and so across the valleys to San Francisco.

A NEW GUNPOWDER.—An interesting trial of a new explosive material, called "Electric Powder," invented by Mr. Robt. Boyle, who for a number of years has been known as a missionary lecturer, was made in the Muirhouse Brickfield, Port Eglington. The experiment took place in presence of Mr. Dalglash, M.P., the Lord Provost, Colonel Carter, 63rd Regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel Dreghorn, and other gentlemen. Into a small extemporized cast-metal shell, 5 inches in length, almost an inch in thickness, and having a bore three-quarters of an inch in diameter, Mr. Boyle placed 2½ drachms of his detonating powder; and in order to exhibit its explosive power in the light of contrast, he quite filled up the bore of another shell of the same dimensions, and constructed of the same

metal, with Kame's crystal gunpowder, medium No 2. Pieces of prepared paper, which had been placed over both shells, were then fired at the end farthest from the touch-hole, and while the sparks worked their way up to the powder the spectators removed to a safe distance. In due time both pieces went off, the one which had been charged with gunpowder remaining as sound as before, while the other, which held the detonating or electric powder, had disappeared altogether, or could only be found in the shape of small fragments. The greater explosive power of the new powder was then satisfactorily demonstrated. The safety of the powder in respect of non-ignition, except under arranged conditions, was also illustrated by a portion of it being ground very rapidly between two irons—the heat necessarily generated by the friction being perfectly withstood. Mr. Boyle proposes that his powder should be used exclusively for shells, a new description of which he exhibits in plan, and that the missiles being discharged in the ordinary way, should expend their force either upon fleets or fortresses. Of course the value of the powder in this form and the destructive power of the shells, remain to be tested.

WRITING TELEGRAPH.

A YOUNG employé of the Central Telegraph Office in Paris has invented a new instrument said to be capable of transcribing every species of writing and drawing; but, instead of, as in the systems of Bonnelli and Caselli, using chemically prepared paper, he simply employs a wide strip or ribbon of the most ordinary paper, on which the despatch is printed in printing-ink of any colour, blue, red, or any other. The great drawback to this invention is that it only pretends to transmit *fac-similes*, five centimetres (1 ¾ in.) broad, the width of the tape; but in compensation for this fault it is stated that the length of the band is unlimited, and that the apparatus can transmit forty messages per hour.

The transmitting instrument consists of a cylinder 4 ¾ in. long, and 1 ½ in. in circumference, round which is wrapped the despatch to be sent, written in ordinary characters upon tinned paper. The message, in turning round the cylinder, presses against a point which traverses it in the direction of its length.

The receiving apparatus is composed of an endless screw, 1 ft. 6 in. long, the thread of which, making rather less than one revolution, rubs against an inked roller and turns round above a band of white paper, which unrolls with the same velocity as the point travels at the despatching apparatus. Both instruments work by means of weights, the movement being, as in other apparatus of this nature, controlled by electricity, isochronism being indispensable between the movement of the point and the turning of the endless screw.

When the current passes, an electro-magnet holds the paper at a distance from the screw; but when the current is interrupted, in consequence of the point having touched the non-conducting ink of the despatch, the band is pressed by a spring against the spiral screw, and a dot is made corresponding to the part of writing traced by the point at the other end of the line.

The Director-General of the administration of the telegraph lines of France kindly placed at the disposal of M. Meyer 360 to 380 kilometres of a very circuitous route for the essay of his apparatus, and the success has been greater than was anticipated.

THE DIAMOND EXCEEDED.—The crystallized protode of copper, recently found in crystals, transparent to red light, in Chezey (Rhône), far exceeds in refractory power the diamond. H. M. Pizeau has recently shown that both expand under heat.

If, as soon as its flowers have been gathered, the stalks of the hop-plant are made in bundles, and well steeped in water, then dried in the sun, and beaten like hemp, a fibre will be obtained, which after having been combed, is admirably adapted for being spun into cordage.

ANCIENT BRICKS.—Professor Unger, the celebrated Vienna botanist and paleontologist, has recently made some remarks on the bricks of the ancient Egyptians, especially those of the pyramid of Dashur, which was built about 3,400 years before our era. One of them being examined through the microscope by the professor, he discovered that the mud of the Nile, out of which it was made, contained not only a quantity of animal and vegetable matter, but also fragments of many manufactured substances, whence we may conclude that Egypt must have enjoyed a high degree of civilization upwards of 5,000 years ago. Professor Unger has been enabled, by the aid of the microscope, to discover in these bricks a vast number of plants which at that time grew in Egypt. The chopped straw clearly discernible in the body of the bricks confirms the description of the manner of making the latter, such as we find it in Herodotus and in the book of Exodus.



"SI, SEÑORITA, SI."

CHAPTER VI

On the south coast of Cuba, forty miles from Cape Maisi, the most eastern part of the island is and was the harbour or bay of Guantánamo.

The entrance is narrow and winding, like the track of a serpent, though of almost unfathomable depth.

The harbour expands within like a peaceful lake in the bosom of a wild and picturesque country, mountainous, but fruitful as the Garden of Eden. There grows the fragrant pimento, the coffee-tree with its beautiful scarlet blossoms, white mangos, oranges, lemons, limes, and tamarinds—some green, some ripe, some rotten—cover the ground in every direction.

From the east side of its entrance, half a mile from its mouth, was a narrow stream, scarcely wide enough for the passage of an ordinary skiff, though of sufficient depth to float a ship of the line.

On either bank, the perpendicular rocks rose up into lofty mountains, whose jutting walls were overhung with prickly evergreens and clinging vines that met from side to side, and formed a bower so complete that the rays of the sun at mid-day could scarcely penetrate its tangled canopy.

Far up this narrow gorge was a deep cavern, made no doubt ages ago by the action of the sea, on the high and beetling cliffs that rose above it formed the ramparts of the mighty ocean itself.

Here was the dwelling-place of Don Manuel and his brigand crew. To this silent, secluded spot the five visitors of Pedro—over the mountains, through glen and forest, now fording a rushing stream, now climbing a steep and dangerous precipice—made their way.

At one time, two thousand feet above the level of the sea, they were in full view of the distant ocean, ten or fifteen miles away; at another, deep down, between different ranges of mountains, where the morning sun shone not, and the dew was still clinging to the rich and ruddy fruit that grew on every tree, they moved along.

They rode on in moody silence as it regarded themselves; but ever and anon, the quick tread of their horses would wake up the green parquet or startle from his morning's nap the noisy crane in the deep recesses of the lowland forests.

The day was far advanced when the little cavalcade reached the rendezvous above mentioned. An obscure path led to the opening of the cave. When

[THE PARTING GLASS.]

once at its mouth its vastness became quite apparent.

A hundred horsemen with their beasts might have taken shelter within its jagged walls.

Within the interior were apartments of the most grotesque formation.

The grotto of Calypso, so beautifully described by Fénelon, was not more charming in its rustic simplicity than this cavern of Guantánamo.

On the sides of the rocks and in their crevices, wherever soil had accumulated, vegetation was abundant, and the cave itself was literally covered with green leaves and twisting boughs.

In a ravine near at hand, completely protected from the rays of the sun by what nature had done on the one hand, and art on the other, the horses were kept.

To this place Don Manuel directed his horse, followed by the others.

They were met by a dozen stout, brawny fellows, who crowded up to take the animals and ask the news.

Don Manuel threw the bridle across the neck of his steed and sought his room in the cave.

It was, as might have been anticipated, rough, but curious.

From the ceiling was suspended a lamp. Hanging up, crossed against the walls, were long, crooked sabres and pistols, both huge and rusty.

In one corner was a cot, and in another a large chest, covered with thick straps of iron.

There were two or three chairs, made for convenience rather than ease; and in the middle of the floor was a table on which were a pitcher, three glasses, and a bottle of rum. It was evident Don Manuel had not intended this as his permanent home.

Upon entering the cave, the chief called for his breakfast, and in about thirty minutes (during which time he was resting his jaded limbs on the aforementioned cot), an old Creole woman, sharp-featured and of sallow complexion, entered the room with a pot of smoking coffee and a plate of fried fish.

This was devoured by the hungry brigand without ceremony, the woman standing by.

Having satisfied the first cravings of his voracious appetite with fresh coffee and garlic, the first course was cleared away, and wine and fruit were dealt with in like manner; Don Manuel making this a dinner, in the place of what ought to have been the first meal of the day.

"Now, old Nina," he said, after the fifth glass had been drained and the sixth banana swallowed, "take

these things out of my sight, and see that you observe the same instructions in regard to yourself until I have occasion to call for you again."

The Creole obeyed as one who was accustomed to be commanded, and slid away as quietly as she had entered.

Don Manuel threw himself upon his cot again, and in less than five minutes was fast asleep.

Thus an anaconda fills his mighty stomach, and, stretching himself out upon the strong limbs of the banyan, sleeps until hunger once more arouses him from his stupor.

At the expiration of that time he opened his eyes, surveyed the surrounding objects, and, after seeming to have satisfied himself that he was not dreaming, he commenced the following soliloquy:

"Yes, she promised me in Spain, when we were children, that she would marry me. It was the light of that promise that led me away from Castile. Dolt that I was, I listened to her deceiving voice and left the land of my fathers to become what I now am, for her! Miserable! miserable! miserable! By St. Lucina! I must see her no more. Her last look—was it not cold? The grasp of her hand—was it like that of a tender cousin even? How well do I remember the touch of the same hand when I left our grandfathers' house for the first time for the sacred shades of Alcalá, as, pressing her rosebud lips to mine, I felt her sweet and childlike broath upon my beardless face, and heard her say, 'I will! I will!' as I bade her cherish my memory and love me until I should come back to her again! And in vacation-time at Easter, when I used to go to the Convent of Ildefonso for her, that she might come and spend the holidays and the carnival with us, then, ay, then! she used to twine her round, plump arms about my neck, and swear that no convent walls should ever separate her from me, or fortune blunt the ardour of her affection! She is false, I know; but though she be, I can use no violence towards her. I might bring her here, but she would pine and die, I fear; and I love her yet! She shall stay where she is, and I will watch her there—guard her with more than a brother's vigilance—guard every track by which she might be approached; and, if I must live without her, she shall never be another's. But a vestal shall she be to me, to keep alive, upon the altar of my heart, that fire which was first kindled there by her, in the happier days of the bygone past, now lost for ever! I will follow her at a distance. In the Plaza at Santiago I will exchange glances with her. In the aisles of the great

cathedral I will meet her and touch her hand! and in the club-room gardens I will pass her, and sigh to tell her I love her still! All this will I do, and woe, woe unto him who shall be so unfortunate as to win her affections! Nina!"

"Senor, did you call?" asked the little sharp-eyed Creole woman, entering the room in a half-crouching attitude.

"I did, wench. Bring that large jug of brandy, and call all the men to me!"

The Creole answered affirmatively, and withdrew.

The jug was brought. Twenty stout, savage-looking men came in about the same time, and gathered clumsily around the table. They were unarmed, and their heads were uncovered. The complexion of their faces was very nearly of a bronze-colour, and their long, flowing hair and black, thick whiskers, gave them a hardy and uncivilized appearance.

"Goycoocher," spoke Don Manuel, addressing himself to the most fearless-looking desperado of the twenty—a half-breed, and consequently more dark and swarthy than the rest—"Goycoocher, I have had you all called here to my room to tell you that I am again about to take my leave of you for a short period. I give the command of these men, of course, to you until I return. What say ye all to it?"

"We will obey Goycoocher!" was the unanimous response.

"And what say you, Goycoocher?" asked the chief, addressing himself to the half-breed.

"When you are here, Don Senor, I am simply Goycoocher. When you are absent, I am Don Manuel."

"Then drink," said the latter, filling to the brim all the glasses that were on the table.

"May all the holy saints protect Don Manuel!" was the toast of one.

"May our brave captain never want for a good man to follow him!" drank another.

"Here's to him and the fair daughter of Pedro!" drank a third.

"Here's to Dona Isabel!" drank a fourth.

"Silence!" growled Don Manuel. "Speak her name among you no more!"

The men looked at each other in surprise for a few moments, and then resumed their drinking. The jug was soon emptied, and the party dispersed.

That very evening Don Manuel, dressed as a rich planter of the interior, was riding fearlessly along the grand highway in the direction of Santiago.

On the evening after the final departure of Beall from the city there was a public ball to take place in the club-room.

The Governor had lately been appointed to the Captain-Generalship of Havana, and would shortly leave for that place to enter upon his duties.

The principal citizens, by whom he was greatly esteemed on account of the noble manner in which he had administered their affairs whilst among them, determined to give this entertainment to his honour. It was to be a magnificent affair, and would take place in a certain club-room belonging to a number of wealthy Spanish families, whose armorial bearings signified their connection with what they are proud to refer to in Cuba as "Old Castle."

The evening set apart for the occasion was cool and pleasant for the climate, a slight sprinkling of rain in the latter part of the afternoon having had the effect of laying the dust and giving vivacity to the whole city, and an air of cheerfulness to everything and everybody.

The flowers gave forth a sweeter perfume, the trees appeared of a greener hue, and the street-lamps shone with a brighter glow.

Lent had not come in yet, and there was no ringing of the church bells to call the young maidens to the solemn services of religion.

It was holiday now, and mirth and jollity ruled the city.

Its patron, St. James the Evangelist, had doubtless gone off to visit other places dedicated to his protecting care; and the Santiago of the West Indies, or rather of Cuba, was left to be ruled entirely by its wanton inhabitants, who were taking advantage of his absence in the way of having a little fun and frolic—thinking, perhaps, as there is said to be a time for all things, this was the time to be merry.

By the hour of eight, long lines of volantes, all silver-mounted, with one mule between the shafts and another on the outside, ridden by a servant in livery, might have been seen journeying towards the ball-rooms, whose spacious gardens and ample rooms were already crowded with the *élite* of Santiago. The halls were magnificent. Their very walls were covered with solid mirrors.

Damask curtains, ornamented with the finest pointed lace, and looped up with hooks of gold in beautiful festoons, floated in the spacious windows, and from

the frescoed walls hung gaudy, glittering chandeliers.

There were rooms to dance in, rooms to sit in, rooms to dress in, parlours with *tête-à-tête* recesses, refreshment-rooms, and, in fact, every convenience the heart of man might wish for in the pursuit of pleasure and amusement.

Besides, there was a court composed of gardens, and promenades laid out in the most artistic manner, abounding with flowers such only as the tropics produce.

In four of the principal squares were statues representing the four grand divisions of the world—Europe, Asia, Africa, and America.

All that such a climate is capable of producing, all that a variety of the world might desire of luxury, might here be seen and enjoyed.

In the long, dazzling hall the giddy dance went on. A dozen sets were whirling through the many evolutions at the same time.

It was a sight well calculated to charm the eye of the beholder. The fairest women in the world, in their rich, flowing dresses of snow-white lace and rustling silk, floated through the kaleidoscopic changes of the dance, amidst the flash of diamonds and an atmosphere naturally perfumed, but now artificially so also, to that extent of combination that is nameless and beyond the reach of description.

Is there anyone in that moving throng known to the reader?

Cast your eye around and tell us if among the hundred bright eyes that rival the stars in heaven there are none familiar to you.

Is it not the easiest matter in the world to distinguish Isabel Grinan?

She is the *Venus*, the star of the evening, the very light of the ballroom, the admired of all—she is "la belle."

Delfosse is with her. He is her partner. He stands by her side with the grace of a Frenchman, and bears her through the difficult waltz with the care and dignity of a master.

"You dance extremely well to-night, señorita," he said, complimenting her as he led her to a seat. "I would like to see you dance the *cachucha*!"

"I thank you, señor; but I dislike the *cachucha*. I suppose I dance well because I feel well!"

"Perhaps you do, señorita; and I suppose you dance well because I think you look well; and I think you look well because I love you well!"

"Of course, love hides a multitude of sins. Fie, fie, Delfosse; you might as well say I dance badly to-night."

"And I might just as well say I don't love you to-night, when I swear I never loved you half so well!"

"And, perhaps, you would be as truthful in the last as in the first instance, señor."

"You are a sad coquette, my Isabella. But isn't the air rather close here? Would you be pleased to walk in the garden?"

"Bring my shawl from the ladies' hat-room, if you will be so kind. Here is the check, señor. My mother will go."

Delfosse approached with the shawl, followed by the señora.

"You are particularly polite, as well as serviceable this evening," said Isabel, smiling, as he adjusted the wrapping.

They left the ballroom and entered the garden, the mother following in the rear; always, however, keeping in sight of her daughter, thus obeying a law that custom has made—a violation of which in no other country or among any other people would be apt to lead to anything criminal, but which in the Spanish West Indies is the first step to ruin, simply because it is believed to be so.

"Ah! where is our Englishman?" asked Isabel, with a pensive air, as they began to stroll through the garden.

"Gone, señorita," replied Delfosse. "Gone home with a broken heart."

"How?" exclaimed Isabel, affecting both surprise and ignorance.

"Why, señorita, he loved a pretty Spaniard, and was ashamed to tell her of it."

Isabel looked aside; then turning her face up towards Delfosse, said:

"You fib, señor. The Englishman wasn't in love. If he had been, don't you think he would have had bravery enough to declare it? Englishmen, you know, are brave enough for anything."

"Ha, ha! señorita, you grow interested in the young man's defence. But did you know that he loved you? He was a rival of mine; indeed he was."

Isabel blushed, but Delfosse did not perceive it.

"I think you do wrong," she said, laughing, "to talk about your friend thus in his absence. You should not accuse him when he is not present to defend himself."

"Ah! it is no accusation that can injure him in

the least. I like him too well for that myself, I assure you. But, señorita, I'm in earnest now. Don't you think that he loved you?"

"For your sake, perhaps he did, señor," was the arch reply. "I shall tell him, however, if I ever see him again," she continued, "that his friend Delfosse suspected him of being his rival."

"I do not suspect at all. He told me he loved you," said Delfosse.

"Then he told you—"

"More than he told me, you would say, I have no doubt," put in the former, and apparently to the gratification of Isabel.

"You did not say just now that he said he had an interview with me last night?" inquired the latter, after a momentary pause.

"No, I did not. You are absent, señorita. If you continue to talk in that manner I shall begin to fear before long that my friend did make an impression."

"By no means ought you to think so; I only misunderstood you. I can scarcely say why I asked such a foolish question. I was thinking of something else."

"Here's the statue representing his country and yours, Isabel," said Delfosse, changing the subject of the conversation as they approached the object referred to. "Let us take a seat under this orange-tree by the fountain," he said; "I have some words of meaning to whisper in your ear, my sweet Isabel."

The señora, who was following, took a seat at some distance from them, with as little concern as if she had not a daughter in the world; and no one unaccustomed to life in the West Indies would have supposed for a moment that she was acting the part of a spy, so accustomed was she to the business.

There were many now thronging the aisles. It was ten o'clock, and those who had danced in the first sets were taking a recess in the garden, recreating among the flowers. Isabel and her lover had taken the seat proposed by the latter, and already the glowing conversation had begun, when, turning her head and casting her eyes behind her, she beheld in the thick leaves of the shrubbery the crouching form of a man. In an instant Don Manuel was in her mind. She only had time to seize the arm of Delfosse and whisper, "Let us retire from this place," ere the keen point of bright blades sank deep in the back of the Frenchman.

With a groan, the fainting man clapped his hand to the gushing wound, and fell upon the ground.

Isabel had already swooned. The watchful eye of the señora was the first to discover the catastrophe. Running to the spot, she discovered the state of Delfosse and her daughter, and immediately gave the alarm.

Some of the people rushed thither at once; and after seeing Isabel recovered from her swoon, and learning from her the author of the deed, and placing her unfortunate lover in good hands, they raised a hue and cry, and started in pursuit of the assassin.

He had for a long time been the terror of Santiago. The robberies he had committed in the city were numberless, and his name was a very terror to old and young.

Coming upon his track for a short while, many of the civilians, besides a police-guard, were close at his heels; but by turning a corner, and taking a dark and dirty alley, he managed to elude his pursuers; and but for a brief time—for having now approached very near to the house of Pedro, he was observed by a citizen to enter, and thus the eager populace and willing soldiers were led directly to the place of his rendezvous.

Suspicions of Pedro's honesty had been rife for years, and the tracking of Don Manuel in his domicile was sufficient ground for an incensed mob (for such was now the character of the tumult) to do open violence to his person or property.

This under present circumstances, was not difficult, to all outward appearances, the house being anything but formidable in any respect, and loud cries of "Go in, go in; tear the cursed pirate's house down upon his own head! He's an accessory to the murder!"

"Pedro is a pirate!" cried one. "Don Manuel's a smuggler!" cried another. "Down with the house! break open the door and drag him into the street. Ho, for the assassin!"

Pieces of iron and cinders from the front of the blacksmith's shop were thrown with violence against the side and roof of the house, and against the door, and the soldiers commenced beating the door with the ends of their muskets, and calling out for admision to the premises. In the meantime the disturbed inmates were contriving plans to escape.

Juanita was prostrate with excitement. It was not, however, because she feared the mob would hurt her, for innocence has no fears. It was the horrible cry.

"Pedro is a villain! Pedro is a robber! Kill the pirate without mercy!"

She had given up every hope and had fallen down before her crucifix. While in that position and nearly insensible Don Manuel rushed into the room, caught her in his arms, and commanding Pedro to follow, climbed the back wall of the garden, and leaped down behind the stable into an alley. Without being seen, and still bearing the fragile form of the young girl in his giant-like embrace, he ran with all his might towards the suburbs of the city, and thence to the mountains.

In consequence of this, the brigand's horse and Pedro's scanty household-effects were the only trophies of the assailants. The former was saved; but in spite of all efforts to the contrary, the house and its contents were completely demolished; and when not one stone was left upon another, and there was nothing to destroy, they reluctantly retired.

As for the ball, it was completely broken-up.

Poor Delfosse was carried home with a dangerous wound in his back, which was pronounced by the attendant physician to be very severe, but not mortal; and Isabel, pale as death from the shock occasioned by the sight of so much blood, was all night long unable to repose except on the lap of her mother, whose solicitude for her was unbounded.

CHAPTER VII.

DON MANUEL, with Juanita leaning on his arm, and old Pedro at his heels, pursued his way undisturbed among the mountains, directing his steps towards the cave of Guantanimo.

Finally, when the path became very narrow, the young girl walked between the two men, the trio all in single file. A moody silence, only broken now and then by a growl from the pirate, was preserved. Juanita asked no questions. She was not anxious to be inquisitive.

She knew not, neither cared to know, whether they were leading her, or what had been the cause of the uproar in the city. Like one doomed to a fate he cannot avert, she passively submitted to the control of Don Manuel and her wretched old father without a murmur.

And when they reached the cave she uttered not a word of surprise, but entered the room assigned to her, as a prisoner would his cell doomed to imprisonment for life. Her sufferings, if they might so be termed, were all internal. She had known before that the life her father led was not a repeatable one. She knew also that he did not obtain his living by honest toil; but she never until now felt what it was to be the daughter of a pirate—the child of an outlaw.

The dreams the old blacksmith had fostered by his conversation—perhaps, for no other reason than that it pleased her, as it does all women, to be flattered—were all gone. The reality as it was, had been, and to all human knowledge would still continue to be, rose up before her, displaying its own true colours, without one tint of hope or promise of future improvement.

The bracelet the old man had given her now ceased to possess, in the mysterious letters engraved within, any charm whatever; though she still kept it concealed—not that she thought it would ever be of more value to her than it was then, but because she fancied her father might want to take it from her.

Her room was apart from that of Don Manuel and Pedro, as well as from that in which the men were quartered, and her only companion was old Nina, the Creole.

Yet she was daily aware of events as they transpired.

The robbers returned to the cave every night with some new booty; sometimes consisting of merchandise, and at others of valuables, such as watches and money.

So industriously was this business prosecuted that it soon became necessary to have their commodities removed, in order to make room for the increasing plunder.

To that end, a schooner was obtained, of which old Pedro took command.

Whenever occasion required it, this vessel was brought, late in the evening, to the mouth of the harbour, and the fruits of this nefarious trade was shipped on board by means of a small row-boat always kept at the cave.

By this means the robbers were able to furnish themselves with the necessities of life; and besides, to dispose of their own goods to great profit by a contraband trade, which was so dexterously managed that they eluded the utmost vigilance of the Government officials.

Don Manuel was absent most of the time; and when he was at home was very seldom in Juanita's room.

When he visited her apartment, however, as he sometimes did, he was remarkably circumspect in his deportment towards her, not even taking those little

liberties he was used to taking when she lived alone with her father in Santiago. That modesty, so characteristic in the breeding and habits of the Spaniard, was not ignored by the brigand, even in the depths of the rock-bound cave of Guantanimo.

It was whispered among the men that he would, at some day in the future, make her his wife; but certainly as yet he had mentioned nothing of the kind to her. To speak the truth, he had never for a single moment entertained such an idea or cherished such a desire.

It was natural for one of her age unquestionably to wish for a being to love and to look up to for protection. It was natural for her to crave for a manly arm on which to lean in the darker hours of adversity and trial; but the ideal of her dreams had never appeared to her, and perhaps never would.

Her heart was as pure and spotless as the driven snow; and like that, was only waiting for an impression, which impression would be made whenever a proper agent presented itself; and if such a thing as that never occurred, the former would never happen. In which case, how appropriate would be these lines of the immortal Gray:

"Full many a gnat of purest ray serene,
The dark, unfathomed depths of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its fragrance on the desert air."

Alas! how many such sweets perish in this world untaught.

So went on affairs at the cave of Guantanimo.

Meanwhile, Delfosse was convalescent; a week's confinement to his room, and he was able to be on his feet again.

The wound he had received from the knife of Don Manuel proved to be only a deep flesh one, and nature and her assistant, the good surgeon, with now and then a sweet souvenir from Isabel, had all gone a great way to restore him to perfect health.

But, unfortunately for his affianced, she had never been herself since that ill-fated night.

Whether the effects of the swoon or continual dread of Don Manuel, or something else entirely different from either, was the cause of it, no one knew, but one thing was quite apparent—she was ill. And under that illness she was fading—fast fading, like a rose plucked from its stem or bruised on the stalk. Ever since, or from about the time of the ball, there had been growing day by day in the beautiful lines of her Grecian face the unmistakable signs of disease. She had lost almost entirely that cheerfulness of disposition and vivacity of spirit she was formerly so noted for, and seemed now only the shadow of what she used to be.

Her mother could not be ignorant of her situation. Hence a physician was called. Fresh air and a change of diet and scenery were recommended.

All the maternal feelings of the señora were aroused; and some course must be speedily taken, or Isabel would die.

There was belonging to the family a small thatched-roofed cottage on the seaward declivity of Mount Tarquinas, about half-way from Santiago to Cape de Cruz. Señora Grinian determined to take her daughter to this place as a last resort.

"There," thought she, "where the sea-breeze comes in fresh from the ocean, where the wild birds sing, and the flowers of the mountain bloom, she will regain her accustomed health and happiness."

The house had been occupied by an overseer, who had under his control a few negro slaves, and worked about ten acres of ground, growing coffee and sugar-cane.

Señora Grinian determined to take with her only a single attendant—namely, Dolores, the favourite of her young mistress.

There were more sad hearts in Santiago than one when the trio left for Mount Tarquinas.

Delfosse was not alone in his grief; Isabel was dearly loved by all who knew her, and her affable manners and uncommon beauty had won for her a host of admirers amongst the first families of Cuba.

Many had sought her hand in the days of her glory, but to none except the Frenchman had she ever given any encouragement. He was looked upon by all as the happiest man in the world.

Who will wonder, then, when they are told that he followed her to the boat (for they went by water), with tears in his eyes, and stood upon the shore and waved adios with his pocket-handkerchief in answer to her, until a jutting point in the harbour shut out the retreating vessel, as the grim outlines of the mountains hide the setting sun from the forlorn traveller in a strange land?

Like one lost was Delfosse. There had been a time when he was a stranger in Santiago; when every face was new to him, and there seemed to be no affinity between him and any other human being within the compass of his social sphere. But infinitely more lonely was his present situation than then.

If to be without a friend, having never had one, is a misfortune, how much greater is the affliction of losing one whose society has been to us the sweetest solace of our life!

It is impossible for us to appreciate the loss of what we have never enjoyed; but deprive us of a single source of pleasure, and our existence is clouded.

Delfosse had lived in a world bounded by affection, as the visible hemisphere appears to be bounded to the mind of a child. Earth and heaven met, and beneath the great concave he walked alone with Isabel.

Now she was gone; had left him for months, and in such a feeble state of health that death might intervene ere he could have the pleasure of holding her face again.

To him this sad parting was like the warning voice of the old man of the Mauritius to Paul and Virginia; and like theirs so might be this separation—for ever. Days passed by, but time offered no antidote. Absence failed in his case to effect a cure, or even give relief; and every hour but accumulated his sorrow.

In this state of mind he left the place in which he was employed, and in the evening of a sultry day walked out into the adjoining country, to while away the tedious hours, and if possible to forget for a moment the cause of his despondency.

It had been currently reported that Don Manuel was dead; and as no one had heard of him in or about Santiago for a long time, everybody believed the story. So Delfosse was not afraid to walk alone on that account. But whether he met with and was slain by Don Manuel or not, or whether he perished in the mountains, no one could tell; but that he never came back became a solemn fact. His old haunts were vacant, his face was lost to his friends, and finally his name ceased to be mentioned in the city of his adoption.

(To be continued.)

ADVICE TO MODEST HEIRS.—Recently a notary had to find out a young man, a private in a Cuirassier regiment, who was a happy next-of-kin. "You are from Touraine, you are this, that, and the other," said the notary, and was replied to with distinct and clear answer and proof. "Well, then," said the notary, concluding, "you are the heir of eight hundred thousand francs, and I shall be very happy to advance you any sum you may require." "Well, monsieur, if it is quite convenient," replied the heir, "I should feel very much obliged for the loan of two francs."

PECULIAR TRADES IN PARIS.—At the present time Paris contains 12 manufacturers of artificial eyes and 8 of pastrycooks' jackets, 2 makers of skates and 40 corncutters, 18 wholesale mustard merchants, 7 constructors of lightning conductors, 7 of speaking-trumpets, and 3 beehive makers, 8 manufacturers of wooden heads for barbers and bonnet-makers, and 3 of corkscrews, 16 dealers in vanilla and 13 in leeches, 49 cutters of hares' hair for the hatters, and 13 manufacturers of helmets and hatchets for sappers, 19 butchers and 15 makers of reeds for clarinets, bassoons, and hautbois, 13 muzzle-makers and 4 crutch-makers, 18 gut workers and 9 manufacturers of foot-warmer, and 1 breaker-up of carriages.

THE PARIS EXHIBITION.—The Great Exhibition of 1867 is beginning to frighten the Parisians, like that of London did when first propounded. The people are frightened there will be a famine in Paris, and that, without the Government makes efforts to keep up the supply, the country people will not, and the tradespeople cannot. In London we know that demand creates supply without intervention. Perhaps it may not be so well in a well-regulated country. The Parisians, however, feel some comfort in the fact that horse-meat has now been introduced, is plentiful, and is relished. Perhaps the foreigners will not be able to draw comfort, as they do not desire to draw sustenance, from the same source.

PRICK OF SCOTCH LAND EIGHTY YEARS SINCE.—We have before us a curious document, some of the items of which will no doubt prove interesting to those who rent land in Scotland for fishing and shooting. It is a report of the British Fishery Society in 1787; and looking at the high terms now obtained for land in Scotland, we must readily admit that the member who said posterity would conclude that they had made a good bargain was a good prophet. The report states that "a large part of Tobermory Farm was purchased for the society from Mr. Campbell, of Knock. It consists of five hundred acres round the harbour. Terms were, the present rent, £53 10s., and £500 down. The Duke of Argyll sold the society a still better bargain, having only asked the present rent of about £30 or £40 for fifteen hundred acres, so that the society is now in possession of two thou-

sand and odd acres round British Harbour for £90 a year, and £500 paid in money. One of the party said he would leave directions for publishing in the newspaper, fifty years hence, the terms of this purchase, and would appeal to posterity for a confirmation of his opinion, in which he was singular, that the bargain made with Knock is a cheap one, for in less time than fifty years the land round Tobermory would yield the society £2,000 a year." The whole of the proceedings of this society are worth perusal. The Duke of Argyll was president and Lord Breadalbane vice-president, and these noblemen, with a committee of five persons, made voyage from London to the Hebrides, surveying the islands and coasts of the west for fishing purposes and for founding stations. That they were well received by the residents the following extract from their journal showing their proceedings at Arras affords good evidence: "The day was fine. The boats of the Highland gentlemen had colour flying, a bagpiper in the bow of each, and rowers in uniform liveries, and made a fine appearance. His Majesty's health, success to the fisheries, and many other loyal and patriotic toasts were drunk, accompanied with a discharge of swivel guns, with which all the vessels and some of the boats were provided. The company were all in great spirits. A gayer scene could not be seen."

KENMORE.

CHAPTER XV.

On the day following the tournament the peasantry had the field for such sports as they saw fit to engage in, and after that the assembly dispersed. The king remained until the third day, when he returned to Scone, most of the Scottish knights going with him. Before he left he gave promise of an enduring friendship to Aldred of Lanark, and strongly urged the young man to make his appearance at the capital very often. The Earl of Northumberland, with his English followers departed on the fourth day, and thus Kenmore Castle was once more quiet. Some of these knights would have remained longer for the enjoyment of forest sports, but the sickness of Edwin kept the earl from joining them, and they thought it best to withdraw. Douglas stopped, as he felt it duty bound to do.

On the evening of the sixth day of his prostration Edwin of Kenmore lay upon his bed, his head against a pile of soft pillows, and his face turned towards the window which overlooked the lake. The sun was just touching the rugged crest of Ben Lawers, and a golden glory suffused the balmy atmosphere. Atholbane sat near the foot of the bed, the countess stood by his side, while Clara Douglas was seated by the invalid's pillow.

"I think he sleeps," said Lady Margaret.

Clara made no reply, and presently the countess left the chamber, remarking, as she turned away:

"I shall return by the time he wakes up."

Hardly had his mother gone when Edwin opened his eyes. He had grown very thin and white—so much so, that even the blue lines that had marked the course of the veins had disappeared.

"Clara, is my father here?"

The earl arose, and stood near his son.

"Father, where is Aldred? I have not seen him to-day."

"Would you see him now, my son?"

"Yes, I love Aldred."

Atholbane went to the door and called a servant, whom he sent upon the errand.

Ere long the Knight of Lanark came, and the boy's eyes lighted up with a sudden flash of gratification as he felt the hand of his friend.

"Dear, good Aldred!" spoke the invalid, "I wished to see you once more; I wished to tell you how much I loved you, and how like a brother you have seemed to me; and I wished that you should know this in order that you might cherish my memory when I am gone."

The knight bent over and kissed the boy's white brow.

"Dear Edwin, it needed not such words from your lips to give me assurance of your love, or to fix your fond image in my memory of blessing. If I have seemed like a brother to you, you have in turn bound yourself very close to my heart."

A warm, happy smile overspread the face of the lad, and presently he said:

"Once I thought it would be a very hard thing to die, but I think so no more. I am sure there is a better world than this—a world where there is no falsehood, and no envious malice—where there is no pain—where duty and happiness are united, and where the Lord of Glory reigns for ever."

"Hush, Edwin," spoke the earl, in a trembling voice; "you know the physician told you that you must not talk too much."

"I know; but still, father, what I have to say I must say now, for I am going away very soon. Come near to me, Clara; raise my head a little higher."

The maiden placed another pillow beneath his head, and, at the same time, the earl drew nearer to his side.

"The sun is going down—down, down. See how gloriously it sets. Clara, your hair looks like gold, and your cheeks like the blooming rose; but the golden glory of earth can come to an end and the roses can fade. But you must not worry on that account. For such as you, dear cousin, the immortal gates are open, and when these beauties fade, those beyond the grave shall be yours for ever more."

A little while the invalid lay gazing upon the grand sunset scene, and then he turned to his father.

"Father, I owe it to Clara and to yourself to set your mind right where, now, I think it is wrong. When I am dead you must not look upon my fair cousin as having lost her affianced husband, for such is not the case."

"Edwin, you wander—"

"Stop, father; I know what I am saying. Ask Clara."

The earl looked towards the maiden, and she said:

"He speaks truly, my lord."

"Aye," continued Edwin, "my cousin must be set right. If I had lived we should not have been married. She loves me tenderly and truly, but I have only a brother's place in her heart. She has been honourable and just. She would have sacrificed herself if I had said so, and had lived to accept, but I would not have it so. I never loved Clara as a strong man should love the woman whom he would make his wife. My own weakness of body caused me to shrink from claiming the holy relationship. What was I that I should presume to be the husband of Clara Douglas? So, my father, we have been very dear to each other, having no brother and sister, and when I am gone Clara will have lost a brother—no more."

Atholbane looked from his son to Clara Douglas, and then from her back to his son.

The maiden saw that there was no sign of anger upon his face or yet of disappointment, only an expression of surprise and wonder, and she ventured to say:

"Blame me not, my lord. Had Edwin claimed my hand I should not have withheld it. He has told you the truth. Had I married him he would have had my hand without my heart."

"I should have lost more than I had gained," interposed Edwin. "I should have gained a cold and empty hand, and lost all the love of a fond sister. Lady, you have been honourable and just. It is not your fault that your heart has been given to another."

"My lord?"

"Hush. I ask no questions. If you cannot be Edwin's wife then may heaven bless your union with some brave and noble man. Be your choice what it may, so that your happiness is to be promoted thereby, I will bid you God-speed."

Clara arose to her feet and moved to Atholbane's side, and, without speaking, she put her arms about his neck and pillow'd her head on his bosom.

"Lady—beloved—what is the matter? Why do you weep?"

"Bless you, my lord!"

She had spoken thus in a sobbing tone, when a strange sound from Edwin's lips arrested her attention, and both she and the earl started up. The boy was trying to speak, but his voice had failed him, and when he saw that his father was looking he pointed to Aldred.

"What is it, my son?"

"Aldred—Clara." It was a feeble whisper, and it was he could say.

Atholbane understood him, however; he slowly shook his head, then he took his son's hand and quietly said:

"I have no power to bestow, but I will not oppose."

A smile of gratitude lighted up the pale face of the boy, and presently his gaze wandered to the distant mountains, where the horizon was in a glow with the purpling halo that dwelt above the declining sun. Those who stood by the bedside waited for him to speak again; but he did not. The hand that rested upon his bosom slid down by his side, a mystic shadow crept over his face, the warm light faded from the eye, and the mortal had put on immortality.

"So fades my last hope of earth," groaned Atholbane, sinking upon the bed with his face buried in his hands.

And Aldred, drawing him up and holding his hand in both his own, made earnest speech:

"I cannot take the place of a son to thee, Atholbane; but another place I will fill if heaven gives me

strength and knowledge. I will be a brother to do thee service with my life if need be."

For a week or more after the funeral a deep shadow rested upon Kenmore Castle, and the inhabitants thereof walked to and fro as though all shared in the heavy grief of the earl. Thorwald was away most of the time; but when he was at home he professed to mourn with the rest.

The countess expressed much regret that she had not been with her son when he died, and her regret was sincere.

She had loved her pale boy, though from his earliest childhood she had not placed much hope in his reaching manhood. He had never received from her the love that warmed her heart to her firstborn, and who shall say she was to blame? She had loved Eric of St. Philip as she never had loved Atholbane, and the son of Eric had a place in her regard that could not be given to another.

One morning, about two weeks after Edwin's death, Lady Margaret spoke with her husband upon a subject that occupied her thoughts continually.

"My lord, are you willing that I should speak with you upon a matter which is to me of grave importance?"

"Certainly, Margaret; speak on."

The earl seemed to know what was coming, for he sat down and prepared to listen without any show of surprise.

"I wish to ask you," pursued the countess, with a slight trepidation in her manner, "whether you look upon my son as standing in the line of heirship to Kenmore?"

"You speak of Thorwald?"

"Of whom else should I speak? He is the only son I have."

"Margaret, I cannot answer that question now." Atholbane spoke moderately and kindly, but yet with decision. "By the right of blood Thorwald has no more claim to the heirship than has my forester or my butler. Were I to die to-day he would not touch an atom of this land, or count a farthing of the revenue therefrom."

"What would become of Kenmore in such an alternative?" asked the lady.

"You would hold a living here while you lived a widow."

"And then?"

"Then, as I should leave no direct heir, the whole estate would revert to the crown, as in the first place it was a gift from the crown to my father for services rendered; but, Margaret, we will not pursue this subject now."

"But," urged the lady, anxiously, "you have the right to appoint an heir?"

"That right is not vested alone in me," replied the earl. "I can nominate an heir, but the king must sanction it."

"And, my lord, if you were to nominate my son, would Edgar refuse to confirm it?"

Atholbane shook his head with a dissatisfied air.

"Margaret, I am yet in the prime of life. I may outlive Thorwald many years. What is hidden in the womb of time we cannot tell. Your son has a home here, and holds an honourable position, while he chooses to remain he shall have such regard as he merits. But I am not prepared to go farther now—mind you, my lady, I do not speak with objection to Thorwald, but with objections to the principle involved. Edwin's place cannot be filled at present. Wait. I will be Earl of Kenmore while I live, and if I do so many years longer, coming time may work out a solution to the problem of succession that shall save us all trouble and perplexity. Wait, Margaret; we have no need of haste."

The countess turned away with an expression of disappointment, which she could not conceal. "Upon my soul!" muttered the earl to himself, after she had gone. "I wonder much at her anxiety in this matter. What can be her object in urging such a thing at this time?"

And it troubled him not a little, though not for a long while, for within two hours after his wife had left he Earl Douglas sought him in his chamber.

"Now, my good brother-in-law," said Douglas, after he had seated himself, "it is time that we had some understanding of the relations between us, as they have been left by the death of Edwin. I have not spoken before because I would not break in upon your sorrow; but as the matter is one of importance I have thought farther delay unnecessary."

"You are right," replied Atholbane; "but still I cannot see that the subject has the importance you give it. In the death of my son our company fails, and there, it seems to me, is the end."

"Not necessarily," said Douglas. "You will remember that our object in the proposed marriage was a union of our houses. The time may come—in fact, it is very likely to come—when the salvation of the

realm may depend upon the union of the Scottish chiefs, and surely the need of that union is as great now as when our children were affianced."

"I understand you," answered the Earl of Kenmore; "and I admit that your proposition is just, but I fail to see what end you aim at. The only bond of union we had is broken."

"But," suggested Douglas, "there may be a new one."

"How so?" demanded Atholbane, "I have no living child."

"But your wife has."

In a moment the whole truth flashed upon Kenmore's mind, and he now knew why the countess had been so anxious concerning her son.

"My brother," he said, after a moment's reflection, "I comprehend you. If I will make Thorwald heir to this earldom you will bestow your daughter's hand?"

"Yes," answered Douglas, quickly, "you have it now?"

"Ah!" returned the other, with a solemn shake of the head, "I had not thought of that."

"But what do you think of it now?"

Atholbane arose from his chair and walked several times across the room; finally, he resumed his seat and looked his companion calmly in the face.

"Douglas, I have learned to love your sweet child, and I am ready to make any reasonable sacrifice for her peace and happiness. If it would give her joy to see Thorwald made heir of Kenmore—"

"Tush!" interrupted Douglas, with an impatient movement. "Why speak of her? This is a matter of policy. I know what Clara's answer would be. Unfortunately, she loves my low-born protégé."

"You mean Aldred?"

"Yes."

"He is my protégé now," said Atholbane; "and if you will give him the hand of your child, I will promise that the king shall raise him—"

"Bah!" cried Douglas, stamping his foot upon the floor. "Talk not to me of mating a Douglas with the son of a forester. I am surprised. By St. Michael! I love the Knight of Lanark as well as you or the king can love him; but I cannot forget that Walthorp is his father, and that his mother was a servant and the child of a servant. The blood of Douglas cannot mingle with such a current! We need not speak of Aldred more. You cannot make him your heir."

"I wish I could," returned Atholbane; "but the thing is impossible."

"Then," said Douglas, "let us set him aside. I know that my daughter loves him and that he loves her; and it was for that that I sent him away from Lanark. Thorwald comes of noble stock on both sides, and you can make him your heir if you choose."

"My lord," pronounced he of Kenmore, rising to his feet, "I have much to think of before I give you a decisive answer. Let this matter rest where it is at present. I will consider—I will reflect."

"But," interrupted Douglas, "I must have your word that you will not—"

"Hold!" broke in Atholbane, with an imperative motion of the hand. "I must be placed under no restrictions. You do not know all that I know. If you did—But never mind."

"But I am anxious."

"So am I, good Douglas—more anxious than you can know."

"Grant me one favour, Atholbane, and I will rest easy, and await your pleasure."

"Anything in reason."

"Then make some excuse for Aldred to go away from Kenmore."

"I will do so as soon as I can," said Atholbane. "By the day after to-morrow I will send him to the king; and in a private missive to his majesty I will ask that the knight may be kept at court until he hears farther from me. Will that suit you?"

Douglas said that he was satisfied.

CHAPTER XLV

EARL DOUGLAS was not a man to betray a secret, or to violate the confidence of friendship. He was proud of his station, jealous of his honour, and steadfast in his resolution. He had seen but little of his sister since her first marriage; and that little had been upon the bright side; so he regarded her now as a person whom he might trust implicitly—not that he would have placed any weighty business in her hands—but he felt that she had equal inducement with him to maintain the purity and honour of his house. If Margaret had ever conceived a spirit of ill-feeling towards her husband, from any cause whatever, she had been careful not to show it to her brother; but she gave him to understand that all was peace and harmony at Kenmore.

And the earl's estimation of Thorwald had been formed much upon his sister's representation. During

his visits at Lanark, Margaret's son had shown only the best side of his character, as there had been no occasion for him to show any other; and, furthermore, he had contrived to so entertain his host that his companionship had been agreeable. Douglas knew that Thorwald was an accomplished knight, and he believed him to be a true and honourable man. He did not know how much venom there was in the blood of the Son of Eric.

Under all these circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that Earl Douglas should turn his thoughts upon Thorwald as a husband for his daughter after Edwin's death.

He had a strong desire to see Lanark and Kenmore united, and if Atholbane would but make Thorwald his heir, that desire might be gratified.

This idea, once entertained, took firm possession of his mind; and as his sister was equally interested with himself, he communicated freely with her.

And thus, without thought of harm, Douglas told Lady Margaret the result of his interview with Atholbane, at the same time bidding her hope that all would come right. He did not caution her not to tell Thorwald what he had said, because he fancied that she would be discreet enough without any word from him.

Early in the evening, Thorwald sought his mother in her chamber, and proceeded at once to inquire if she had spoken with her husband upon the subject they had in hand.

"Yes," replied the countess, "I have spoken with him, and my brother has spoken with him. To me he was somewhat reserved, but to Douglas he let the whole truth out. I do not think Atholbane regards you very favourably, but yet, if there be nothing else in the way, he might be brought over."

Margaret paused, and when she continued there was much bitter feeling in her tone.

"It is as much as I had thought. My brother has told me all that passed between himself and Atholbane, and I find that Aldred of Lanark is the stumbling-block."

"How?" cried Thorwald; "Aldred a stumbling-block in your husband's way?"

"In our way," responded Margaret, with closed teeth.

"I know," pursued the knight, "that Clara loves this fellow, and I know, too, that he loves her; but she must obey her father."

"Ah, my son," said the countess, with a little reluctance in her tone, "you must remember that my brother's aim is to make his daughter mistress of Kenmore, and Atholbane does not seem inclined to give direct promise that the end can be attained through you."

"Then he refuses to make me his heir?" exclaimed Thorwald, with a frowning brow and clutching fingers.

"No," replied Margaret, "he does not refuse, but he hesitates."

"And does he take thought of Aldred in this connexion?"

"I think he does, my son. At all events, it would please him to see Clara's hand bestowed upon the youth."

"Sdeath!" cried the knight, stamping his foot upon the floor, "would Atholbane make Aldred his heir?"

"No, he cannot do that; but he promises my brother that the king will raise the young knight to a post of honour."

"By heaven!" shouted Thorwald, starting to his feet, "this is past endurance."

"Easy, my son," spoke the countess, persuasively. "If you are not careful we may be overheard. Sit down and listen."

The excited man resumed his seat, and the lady continued:

"We must look at the truth boldly, and not try to put it out of sight. My husband has conceived a strong liking for Aldred of Lanark—so much so, that he seems to think of no one else. While Edwin was alive there existed a slight bond of union between Atholbane and myself; but that is gone, and I am well convinced that I have no place in his heart."

The countess clenched her hands and shut her teeth, and the cloud upon her brow betokened that bitter feelings were in her heart.

"I like it not," she repeated, spitefully. "What with the ghost of Lady Maud, and the liking for this wanderer, and the unaccountable whim of the king, I am driven entirely out from his regard."

"Then," said the Son of Eric, in a whisper, "Aldred of Lanark stands between me and this earldom, and also between me and the hand of Clara Douglas?"

"Hush! you must do nothing rash, my son."

"Will you answer me?" cried the knight, impetuously.

"It is true," replied Margaret.

Thorwald walked several times across the room, and when he finally stopped he had ceased to tremble, and his lips were compressed until they were bloodless.

"Mother," he said, scarcely above a whisper, "I will do nothing rash; I must think of this. Wait until I have reflected."

"Thorwald, your eye is too bright."

"Ha! ha! ha! it needs bright eyes in such times. Look you to the daughter of Earl Douglas, and I will look to the son of Walthorp. But I will do nothing rash. Fear not, my mother."

The knight had turned towards the door, when the countess started to her feet, and caught him by the arm.

"Thorwald," she cried, in accents of alarm, "you frighten me; what mean you?"

"I did not know a Douglas could be a coward!" retorted the son.

"I am not a coward," returned Margaret, quickly; "but I would be careful not to make matters worse than they are now. Your blood is hot, and you may do that which will set Atholbane for ever against you. Ay, and more still—my brother!"

"Tush! you worry yourself without cause, my dear mother."

Thorwald spoke very calmly, and even smiled as he spoke.

"I have told you that I will do nothing rash, and I will keep my word. But of this you may rest assured; I will find some way to send Aldred of Lanark from Kenmore, and I will do it so quietly that my hand shall not be suspected. I have agents—I can find means. So rest you easy. Do not let either of the earls see that you are anxious."

With these words Thorwald left his mother's chamber, and when he appeared at the supper table he was more agreeable than usual. And after that meal the knight assumed his gayest mood, and once or twice he succeeded in bringing a smile to Clara's face.

At length Lady Margaret remarked that they were standing by the wall of the Ghost's Tower.

"I have no particular fear," she said, "but I think we might find a more agreeable place for conversation."

"My dear countess," asked Clara, "do you really think that there are ghosts in this tower?"

Lady Margaret shook her head dubiously.

"Your question, my child, shows that you are not acquainted with affairs at Kenmore."

"But," urged the maiden, "the apartments of the tower are occupied."

"It is a foolish experiment," said Thorwald. "I do not think I am a coward, and yet I would not like to occupy those chambers night after night. We know, fair lady, that there are disembodied spirits in the tower—that the old rooms above us have been, for long years, the abode of spectres. And if we can credit the testimony of reliable witnesses, some of these ghostly inhabitants like not to be troubled. A man of flesh, clad in steel, and armed with spear and buckler, if he attack me, I then know how to defend myself; but we know not how these spirits of another world may lay their evil powers upon us. I have no doubt that men have been stricken with death who have trespassed upon them. At all events, if I were forced to make the apartments of this tower my abiding-place, I should consider my chances of long life materially lessened."

Clara bowed her head, and both Thorwald and his mother could see that she was troubled.

"However," added the knight, after they had started to walk away from the tower, "we who have no cause to trouble the haunted chambers need not fear that their spectral occupants will trouble us. And surely we should be very grateful that their ghostships do not lay claim to any other portion of the castle."

At this juncture the two earls came up, and shortly afterwards the party returned to the keep.

On the following morning, at an early hour, Thorwald called for his horse, and as he prepared to mount, he stated to Douglas, who chanced to be in the court, that he was going out on business.

"But," said the earl, "we are to have our hunt to-day. Can you postpone your visit?"

"Not easily," replied Thorwald; "but I can, perhaps, do what will answer full as well for you, while it answers much better for me. I can make all possible haste, and return by the middle of the forenoon. I know Atholbane's hunting-ground, and if the ladies accompany you, and you are gone before I get back, I shall find you somewhere on the bank of the river, beyond Fortingal. At all events, you shall see me, and I shall be much disappointed if I do not arrive in season to enjoy most of your sport. I have a rare piece of horse-flesh here."

After breakfast Atholbane ordered the horses to be brought to the inner court, and directed that the foresters should make ready all things for a day's

sport. Some surprise was expressed by the countess that Thorwald was absent; but when her brother informed her that her son would probably join them before noon, she seemed satisfied.

The party had been gone some two hours or more when Thorwald returned; but he made no haste to follow them. He dismounted at the entrance to the stable yard, and directed Griffeth, who had been in waiting for him, to see that his horse was properly cared for.

"But, my master," said the esquire, "the earl expects you in the forest. He bade me tell you that you would find him near the river."

"We will be off before long," returned the knight; "but I must first go to my chamber, where I have matters of my own to attend to. I will call you when I am ready."

Thorwald went to his room, where he removed his riding-boots and put on a pair of light slippers in their place. Then he came forth, and took his way along the corridor towards the Ghast's Tower.

He walked very carefully, making no noise as his feet fell upon the tiles, and ever and anon casting his eyes around, as though to be sure that he was not observed. When he reached the large bed-chamber which Aldred still continued to occupy, he noiselessly closed the door behind him, and then advanced to the sideboard, whereon stood two bottles, a ewer and two silver drinking-cups. The bottles had both been opened, though only a slight portion of the contents had been used; one contained a fine, aromatic cordial, and the other some choice old wine.

"Yes, yes, my Lady Clara," muttered the intruder, as he set the wine-bottle back, "there may be dangerous spirits in this chamber. Aye—and deadly spirits, too! The Knight of Lanark is not proof against the spectre I shall bring up for him."

As he spoke he drew a phial from his pocket and removed the stopper. His hands trembled a little and he looked carefully around. The door of the Blue Chamber was ajar, and he went and closed it; then he went to the bed, and looked behind the curtains; and finally he returned to the sideboard, and poured half the contents of the phial into the bottle of cordial, and the other half he mixed with the wine.

"So, so," he said, after he had put the bottles as he had found them; "if the ghosts don't drink this up before Master Aldred returns he will find a resting-potion that will give him an eternal quiet!"

There were other bottles in a lower portion of the sideboard, but as they were all sealed, Thorwald judged that they would not be touched until those already opened had been emptied; so he went away with strong faith that his rival would trouble him no more. If he held any doubt of what might be the danger to others through the deadly agent he had left behind him the thought did not give him trouble; for that chamber was not a place frequented by other inmates of the castle.

The Knight of Lanark alone enjoyed the solitude of the old tower; and if he were fond of the company of ghosts, he might very soon put off this mortal tenement, and so enjoy their society without restraint.

Shortly after noon Thorwald, accompanied by his esquire, joined the hunting-party in the forest, and though at times he seemed a little absent in his thoughts, he still managed to bear himself cheerfully.

And especially did he take pains to treat Aldred with marked respect and friendliness; but our hero was not deceived into the belief that his enemy had changed; and, while he received the friendly attentions with becoming grace, he could not fail to observe the snake-like fire of hate that ever and anon lighted up the eyes of the speaker.

The sun was just sinking behind the hoary crest of Bon Lawers when the hunting-party emerged from the forest towards the castle; and Thorwald, drawing his rein, and coming to a walk by where Atholbaine and Douglas rode, said to the former:

"My lord, ere I left this morning I promised Douglas that I would join you in the chase to-day. I kept my promise; but in doing so I was forced to leave my business unfinished. I have friends there waiting for me, and I must join them this evening. I shall return on the morrow."

With this the Son of Eric took off his hat to the party, and having spoken a word of adieu to his mother and Lady Clara, he rode away, followed by his esquire.

Within the castle was a messenger, just arrived from Lanark, waiting very impatiently to see Earl Douglas.

"Ah, Robert! What now?" Douglas was surprised and eager, for Robert was his confidential agent and lieutenant, whom he had left to take care of his castle.

"A message from the countess, my lord," replied the courier, extending a packet as he spoke.

The earl took it, and cut the band with his dagger,

and when he had read the contents he turned to Aldred.

"Good Aldred, you and I must make all haste and eat our supper, and then away for Lanark."

"Now, father?" interrupted Clara, who had just been assisted from the saddle by the youthful knight.

"You will remain here, my child; for Aldred and I must ride with will."

"Is there need of so much haste?" asked Atholbaine.

"Yes," answered Douglas. "We will take fresh horses, and ride to Stirling to-night. There we can rest a couple of hours with our good FitzHenry; and with horses fresh from there we may reach Lanark early on the morrow."

"My lord!" spoke our hero, anxiously.

"Your father is ill, Aldred—perhaps dying. He would see us. He has something to say to me. Let us make haste."

Douglas evidently had something more upon his mind—something which he had gained from the mischievous messenger had brought—but he chose to reveal no more to his *protégé*.

(To be continued.)

Z E H R A.

CHAPTER XIV.

"You will not dare harm him?"

"Whom?"

"Charles of Leon."

"Not dare? He dies the death!"

"Oh, no! no!"

"He does!"

"No! no! He shall not die!"

"Mohammed has sworn it."

Zehra started to her feet, and gazed wildly into Ben Hamed's face.

"Do you mean this thing?" she uttered, in a hoarse whisper. "Do you mean that the king will kill Charles of Leon?"

"Yes."

"Then listen!"

The maiden raised herself to her full height, and gazed steadily upon the Alcalde. Her eyes burned with an intense fire, and her every feature told of the fearful struggle that was working within.

"Listen," she said. "If Charles of Leon dies by order of the king, then I, too, bid farewell to earth. Tell the king this, and tell him, too, that Zehra will not fail in her promise."

Ben Hamed was awestruck by the appearance of the noble-hearted girl. He could not comprehend the soul that gave birth to such a spirit, but yet he could not entirely escape its magic power.

"You are surely wild," he at length said, but he spoke half unconsciously as he still gazed upon the girl.

"I am calm, Ben Hamed—calm. As calm as the fearful stillness that follows the dread quaking of earth after cities have been swallowed up by the gaping flood."

Ben Hamed instinctively moved farther away from the speaker. Her eyes seemed to burn him, and he trembled as he met her look.

"Go, tell this to Mohammed, and then tell him that his people will love him better when they have looked upon the cold corpses of his victims."

"Hush, my child. Go seek your rest. Your sufferings have made you mad. Mohammed shall wait till you are better. Go to your couch."

"Ben Hamed, you mistake me. I am not mad, but I speak soberly, as I feel."

"Hush! Sit thee down, Zehra. I know you are wild and unconscious. You will be better ere long."

"Ah, sir, you know me not. There is no frenzy here—naught but earnest truth."

"I will not believe it. You would not throw away your life. It is not natural for one for whom the future holds out such inducements."

Zehra covered her face with her hands and sank back upon her seat. She knew that she could die with her Christian lover, but when the thought came upon her of how much happiness she might have with him on earth, she felt a degree of sadness that overcame her.

"I will tell Mohammed to wait," added Ben Hamed. "I will tell him that you are ill."

"Wait!" repeated Zehra.

"Yes, for he is anxious about you."

"And how is he anxious?" the maiden asked, in a low, whispering tone.

"For your welfare."

"He wants me at the Alhambra?"

"Yes—as soon as you are well."

"Then heaven grant that health may never be mine again."

"That is a foolish prayer, for you are nearly well now."

"And Mohammed swears to make me his wife as soon as possible?"

"Yes. Your own conduct has made him so resolve."

"Ben Hamed," asked Zehra, in a deep, nervous whisper, "when does the king mean to put the Christian to death?"

"Not until after his nuptials."

"Are you sure of this?"

The Alcalde hesitated. The thought flashed upon him that he might now deceive Zehra and bend her more easily to his wishes.

"I will tell you a secret, Zehra. The king will hold Charles of Leon until you are his wife, and then, if you please him by your conduct, he will let the Christian go; but if you are stubborn, the knight dies."

"You are deceiving me."

"No. In truth I am not. Such is the king's determination. So it lies in your power to destroy or free this Christian."

Zehra looked earnestly upon Ben Hamed, but she could read nothing in his countenance. The thing was not impossible, and she could not think that, with even all his hardness of heart, the Alcalde would lie to her in this.

"I would not hasten you beyond your strength," continued Ben Hamed, with consummate art; "but the king is anxious, and though his anger towards the Christian may slumber now, it only sleeps beneath the power of his love for you. Should he find you obstinate, you know what may be the result. This is the truth. Your own heart must guide you now. If the Christian be an innocent man, it lies in your power to save him. But I need tell you no more."

"When, when does Mohammed wish me for his wife?"

"Now—as soon as possible!"

"And the Christian—where is he?"

"In the prison."

"Oh, if you deceive me in this, may the pains of torture be ever yours! May you never again know rest, or taste the sweets of life!"

"I cannot deceive you in this."

Ben Hamed spoke with a steady, firm voice, though his eyes fell beneath the gaze of the being he was deceiving.

"I will go."

Zehra spoke and sank back upon her couch.

Those simple words had required the whole power of her soul in their utterance, and when they were spoken she could say no more.

Ben Hamed stood over and assured her that she should not go until she was wholly recovered, but she heeded him not.

He spoke words that he meant for comfort, but she knew not what he said.

He asked her to be calm, but she answered only with tears and groans.

When Zehra was alone she arose to her feet and pressed her hands upon her bosom.

Her face was white as marble, and even the veins seemed to have lost their purple flood.

"Oh, Charles of Leon, to save thee I will make the sacrifice. I will not die. I will live; and even while I feel the serpent coil his leathsome folds about me, I will be happy with the thought that I am saving thee. Oh, 'tis a cruel fate for us both; but then shall live, and I will rejoice in thy freedom. We may never meet again but in heaven."

The unhappy girl's hands fell to her side, and then, as they convulsively met upon her marble brow, she sank down upon the ottoman where Ben Hamed had sat, and she murmured the name of him she would never see again.

CHAPTER XV.

The Knight of Leon had seen a week of dull monotony in his Granada prison. He had asked the man who brought him his food how long he was to remain there, and he had asked Tarik, too, but he obtained no answer to his inquiry.

Tarik was sitting alone in his office—a small room in the lower storey of the prison—early in the morning, when he was aroused from his meditations by the entrance of an old dervish.

The old man's brow was wrinkled and weather-beaten, and his unshorn face bore a wild luxuriance of white beard.

He stooped in his gait, and his trembling hands bore a steel-pointed staff, with which he aided his weak steps.

"A blessing upon thee, son!" pronounced the dervish, as he leaned heavily upon his staff.

"I thank thee," returned Tarik, with a feeling of reverence.

"Jailer, you have a prisoner here whom I would see."

"His name?"

"He is a Christian, but I know not his name, nor

do I know whence he comes; but I hear he is a brave man, and one well read in the science of the world. Such a Christian I have longed to see. I would converse with him upon his religion."

"And suppose he should make a Christian of you?"

"Allah forbid!" uttered the dervish, with holy horror. "I will sooner bring him to the fold of the faith."

"I know not that I should do wrong to let you go to him."

"Allah forbid that you should overstep your duty at my behest. If it would be wrong, let me go unsatisfied away; but if it would be right, I would see him. Perhaps 'tis not his fault he is an infidel, and glory be to Allah, and his prophet if one like him shall be converted. Shall I go?"

"I cannot refuse you."

"Thanks, good jester."

"Give me your arm, and I will lead you."

"No. Lead the way, and I will follow. Old age has not yet unmanned me, though the hand of time bears heavily upon me."

Tarik looked kindly upon the old man, and turning towards a heavy door that opened into the prison, he bade him follow.

"Whence comes the Christian?" asked the dervish, as he worked his way slowly up the stone stairs that led to the second storey of the prison.

"From Leon," responded Tarik.

"And his name?"

"Charles, Count of Valladolid."

"A goodly title he hath. Is he so brave as I have heard?"

"Too brave to be at large in Granada. Here is the door. Go in, and I will call for you when your stay has been reasonable."

Tarik opened the door as he spoke, and merely looking in to see that all was right, he closed it again after the dervish had passed through.

Charles looked up, and he wondered as he saw his strange visitor.

"Allah bless and serve thee!" uttered the dervish.

The knight made no reply.

"They tell me thou art a brave knight. Ah, I see the fire in thine eyes now. I have come to save thee."

"To save me!" echoed Charles, starting up from his seat.

"From the pains of the unbeliever in the world to come. I will teach thee of our holy Prophet."

"Cease, old man. Go your way," said the knight, sinking back upon his seat. "I want none of your religion. I have already seen enough of your religion to make me loathe it. It may do for those whose minds can never get above the trash of selfishness, but I want none of it."

"Bravely spake! By San Dominic, Sir Charles, but you speak wonderful well."

"Pedro!" uttered the knight, starting to his feet, while his heart beat wildly in his bosom.

"Pedro Bambino, at your service," returned the faithful esquire, as he shook himself out of his bent position and but a variety of fantastic movements.

"Heaven bless thee! I would press thee to my bosom, but you see I cannot. I had mistaken you, Pedro; for I suspected you of cowardice."

"No, no—there is none of that in Pedro Bambino. I saw the state of things, and I knew I could be of more use to you as I now am than were I lodged in prison."

"I see it all now. But your disguise, my faithful fellow—how gained you such a victory over your own self?"

"This dress—this beard—this staff, and a judicious touch of paint by way of wrinkles, did it all. But there's no time to lose. It will all fit you."

"Fit me, Pedro?"

"Yes, and I have paint, too, for the wrinkles."

"Do you mean that you have come to change places with me?"

"Most assuredly. For what else should I come? You shall go, and I will stay."

"No, Pedro, I cannot do that."

"But you must."

"I cannot. I love you for your kindness, but I cannot accept the sacrifice you would make."

"Nonsense! Do you know that they mean to kill you?"

"So they have threatened, but I do not believe they will dare to do it."

"Let your mind be easy on that point, for I know they will dare to do it, and I think they have set a no very distant day for the deed. You have commanded me as you pleased, and I have obeyed; now I am going to command, and you must obey."

"Do you suppose, Pedro, that I should feel like a man among men were I to let you die for me? How should I tell the tale—that I feared a death that you boldly met for me?"

"No, no—they will not kill me. I am not afraid to die; but I know I shall not die if you leave me here. It is not me they want."

"Nevertheless, they will be revenged on you if they find you here."

"No, I will tell them such a story as will prevent it. I will tell them that you made me do this—that I only came to bid you farewell, and that you made me stop in your place."

"Ah, that would be a flimsy tale."

"Then I will tell them something else. At any rate, you know I shall stand a better chance than you will, for you the king has determined to kill."

"No, Pedro."

"Remember your friends in happy Leon—remember that old woman whom you call mother—and that bright-eyed, happy creature who calls you brother; and then remember—"

"Stop, Pedro."

"Remember the sweet maiden whom the Moors took from you."

"She is lost."

"Not yet, my master. She is not yet with the king; but she will be if you remain here."

"I ought not to leave you here."

"Every principle of right and duty tells me to the contrary. Zehra is yet with Ben Hamed—she has been sick. The king only awaits her recovery. Come, my master."

"But my irons."

"I have the means to cast them off. Come, hasten, before the jailor returns."

"Can I do this?"

"Shall I go alone to Leon, and tell your poor old mother—"

"Stop, stop, Pedro. You have conquered. I will obey you."

"Bless you, bless you, my master. I am happy now."

As the faithful man thus spoke, he threw his arms about the neck of the knight and blessed him again.

"Let us haste, now," he uttered, as he drew forth a small packet from his bosom. "There is no time to lose."

Pedro had provided himself with all the necessary implements for the accomplishment of the object he had in view, and he set to work upon his master's irons in a manner that proved him to understand the business.

The manacles were first taken from the wrists, and then the shackles fell from the feet. Nothing was broken, but the parts were all left so that they could be put together again as before.

"Now for a change of dress," said the honest esquire. "Haste thee, my master! San Jago, but the dervish will become you well!"

Charles of Leon proceeded to divest himself of his garments, but it was done with a slowness that showed he was not wholly satisfied to leave his servant behind.

"My garments will be too long for you, Pedro."

"No—I shall sit me quietly down when the jailor comes."

"But Tarik will notice that I am taller than you were."

"No he won't. You can bend yourself up till you are as short as I was. Here, on with this gown. There! you look like another person already. Now for this wig and beard, and then I'll paint the wrinkles for you."

As soon as the knight was thus metamorphosed, Pedro drew a piece of paint and pencil from his bosom, and placed the age marks upon his master's brow in such a manner as to defy detection except upon the closest scrutiny.

When this was done he called for the knight to help him on with the irons.

"Oh, Pedro, I cannot do this," uttered Charles, as he lifted the heavy shackles in his hand. "Give me back my dress, and I will myself remain."

"Help me on with the irons, I say. This is no time for dallying. The jailor may come and find us in the midst of our work, and then we should both be in for it. Quick, Sir Charles, there is no time to lose."

The knight obeyed, but it was reluctantly. Pedro, however, was all assurance. He showed no fear, but seemed to be really happy by what he was doing.

"There! now all is done," said he, as he rattled his chains and sat down upon the stone bench. "San Dominic, Sir Charles, but these fit me better than they did you; and you make a graver-looking dervish than I did—upon my faith you do."

Charles gazed into the face of his esquire with a look of tearful gratitude, but he was too full of feeling to speak.

"Do not fear for me," Pedro continued. "I feel sure that no harm will come to me. Some way will be opened for my escape from this place."

"I fear that is beyond hope, Pedro."

"I think not. I have all the implements necessary to freeing myself, and I marked well the walls as I came in. Tarik places more confidence upon these stout irons than he does upon the security of his dungeons; and well he may, for no one, unaided, could overcome them. Now if you get clear, which way shall you move?"

"I know not."

"Let it be directly for St. Lorenzo, and if I escape I will join you there."

"But Zehra! I cannot leave her, Pedro."

"She is now beyond our reach. For life's sake, Sir Charles, do not think of escaping with her. I know your feelings, but something must be sacrificed. If you make an attempt to reach her it may be the worse for both of you."

"Oh, I cannot leave her, Pedro."

"But you must. Do not throw away the life you may gain."

"Heaven knows I should almost—"

"Sh! Here comes the jailer. Now on to St. Lorenzo. Wait for me there, and perhaps I may overtake you. There, heaven bless you, my master, and if we never meet again you will not forget poor Pedro Bambino."

Charles of Leon pressed the hand of his faithful servant, but tears alone spoke his thoughts.

"Mind and let your voice tremble as mine did. Bear up, now. Courage."

The door opened as Pedro spoke, and Tarik entered.

"Yes," returned Charles.

"I can almost love your prophet; but yet I think I shall die a Christian," said Pedro, imitating the voice of his master.

Charles of Leon placed his trembling hand upon the head of his follower, and there it rested for a single moment.

Then he turned silently away, and bending low down, as if with physical infirmities, he followed Tarik from the dungeon.

In the office the dervish was requested to sit down and rest, but he declined.

Tarik looked into his face, but he never mistrusted that his prisoner was hidden beneath that garb.

Charles felt a new confidence as he saw that he passed so easily, and with a kind blessing upon the jailer, he stepped into the street.

For several moments the knight stood and reflected upon the course he should pursue.

His heart turned towards the dwelling of Ben Hamed, but his mind said "St. Lorenzo."

When he moved on, however, it was towards the Darro, but he had decided upon no ultimate course.

CHAPTER XVI.

"WELL," uttered Pedro Bambino, as soon as he was safely alone, "hero I am. I know my master well. Now had I told him I meant to have escaped when first I entered, he wouldn't have given up his chains. No; he'd have wanted my tools to make his own escape; but I knew him better. Sir Charles is a wonderful man with open fight, but he's too hot by far for scheming. Now let us look. San Dominic, I think that hole will let this body of mine easily through, if I can but get that bar out of the way. But easy, Pedro; you've been in prison before this. The Frenchman makes stranger places than this, but I've seen you make your way through them ere this. It must be a strong place that holds Pedro Bambino against his will."

The day passed slowly away—dinner and supper were brought to the prisoner, but the exchange that had taken place was not noticed. As soon as it was dark Pedro commenced his operations.

The irons he easily removed from his feet and hands, and then he produced a simple apparatus by which he struck a light on the prepared wick of a small waxen taper.

From the bundle he had concealed in his bosom he drew forth a variety of implements that were the inventions of his own genius.

First he produced a stout steel hook, or "crow-bill," to which was affixed a long wire that was worked into loops at short distances apart.

This hook Pedro skilfully threw over the sill of the small window, and it fixed itself securely on the outer corner of the stone.

He then produced a sharp, small, file-like saw, and after some perseverance he succeeded in removing the iron bar.

The way was now open, and gathering his implements together, Pedro tied them up and placed them in his bosom—all excepting the hook and looped wire.

Beneath the dervish's garb the esquire had worn a scanty Moorish costume—a sort of harlequin's dress—and ere he left the cell he threw off the clothing



[PEDRO'S ESCAPE.]

of his master. Then he blew out his taper and ascended to the sill of the window.

He listened, but he heard no sound of anyone below, and removing his hook on the opposite side of the sill he let the wire fall upon the outside, and then descended to the basement of the prison yard. His hook he then jerked away from its hold, and by its means he scaled the outer wall.

No sentry interrupted him, nor did he see anyone in his way.

As he found himself safe without the prison walls he folded his simple wire ladder together, and then moved quickly away.

"Free! free!" ejaculated Pedro, as he got at a respectable distance from the Moorish prison. "Now heaven grant that I may overtake my master. I do not think he would have remained in the city."

Thus murmuring to himself, Pedro made his way towards the northern gates.

No objection was made to his passing out, and his heart was lighter when he found himself without the city; but he felt not safe while within sight of the Moorish capital, and with eager steps he hastened on.

Before midnight he reached the Guadix bridge, and as he crossed over he stopped a moment to study upon his course.

"The Jaen road is the shortest—the El Ajo the safest. I think Sir Charles would have taken the latter."

"Pedro," spoke a voice, that seemed to come from a clump of low mulberries near the river.

"San Jago!" uttered the esquire.

"No—it's your master, good Pedro."

In a moment more Charles of Leon stepped forth. He still wore the dervish's dress, but he stood upright in it. It was too dark to distinguish countenances but between the master and man there could be no mistake.

"Heaven be praised that I find you safe, at all events," fervently ejaculated Pedro. "But why are you no farther than this?"

"Ah, Pedro, 'tis hard for me to leave Granada, even now; but while you were behind, the thing seemed impossible. Never was mortal so lonely as I have been to-day. It seemed as though the earth itself had deserted me."

"Well, we are together now, and now let us hasten on."

"Pedro, I cannot go."

"And why not?"

"Zehra."

"You know that is impossible."

"But upon my knightly oath did I swear to bring her safe out of Granada."

"And yet you know you cannot. Why throw away your life for nothing?"

"You may go on, Pedro; but I must return. I got, as far as here, but here my heart smote me, and I stopped. Zehra is suffering, and I may yet save her. The thing is not impossible. Go on, Pedro, but I cannot."

The honest esquire was puzzled, and deeply annoyed.

"You will go with me?" he said, at length.

"No—I shall return to Granada."

"Then, Sir Charles, I shall bear you company."

"But suppose I should forbid it?"

"Then I should disobey you."

The knight was silent.

"Listen to me for a moment, Sir Charles," continued Pedro. "It is madness for you to think of this thing. You have done all that man could do, and more than many would have done; and for the present you must rest where you are. What would you do to return to the city now? That dress you wear will betray you in a moment. You can gain none other, for ere morning the news will be out of your escape. There is not an eye in Granada that would not recognize you. Your first step within the gates of the city would be a signal for your arrest. And what can you do for Zehra? Look at it, my master, and tell me if your farther interposition would not be dangerous to her? Oh, can you not see that it would be worse than madness?"

"What can I do?"

"Keep straight on for the north, and when once there perhaps King John will aid you."

For some moments Charles was silent. He saw, and was gradually compelled to confess, that Pedro spoke the truth. Circumstances placed it beyond his power to return untaken to the city of Granada, and reason overcame his blindness.

"Pedro," he said, "I will go with you; but, oh, heaven, the cup is a bitter one. Zehra, Zehra, would I could save thee, even at the risk of life; but heaven knows I cannot!"

The esquire moved close to his master and gazed kindly into his face.

"Sir Charles, there are those in Leon who love you."

"Peace, good Pedro. You know nothing of what I suffer. But move on. If we go we had better make all haste."

"So we will; and perhaps we will find horses ere long."

Twice Charles of Leon hesitated as though he would

have turned back, but at length he nerved himself to the task, and, with quick steps but heavy heart, he kept up by the side of his attendant.

"Sir Charles," said Pedro, as they entered the wood, "do you know I think Abdalla had something to do with your capture?"

"Ah!" uttered the knight, starting with interest at the sound of that name.

"Yes. Someone must have told of our movements, else how could such a party have been turned out at once after us?"

"The Alcalde had plenty of men ready at his bidding, and he might have detected Zehra's escape in time to have given pursuit as he did."

"I can't think so," persisted Pedro. "That Moor is a curious man."

"So he is, Pedro; but he's safe in prison now."

"Eh? In prison?"

"Yes."

"Did you see him there?"

"Yes. The jailer allowed him to come into my apartment; and he talked very strangely about affairs, too."

"What did he say? What did he tell you?" asked Pedro.

"His whole thoughts were upon Zehra."

"But would he tell you nothing of himself?"

"No. He only spoke of Zehra; and he said that in her fate he had a deep interest. He said, too, that his fate and my own might centre in her."

"San Dominic!"

"I doubt whether he be a Moor."

"A Moor!" cried Pedro, stopping short beneath the weight of thought that had possessed him.

"I think he is not," repeated Charles.

"When did he say he was imprisoned?"

"On the very night he met us in the street. Or before morning, at least."

"San Dominic!"

"What think you, Pedro?"

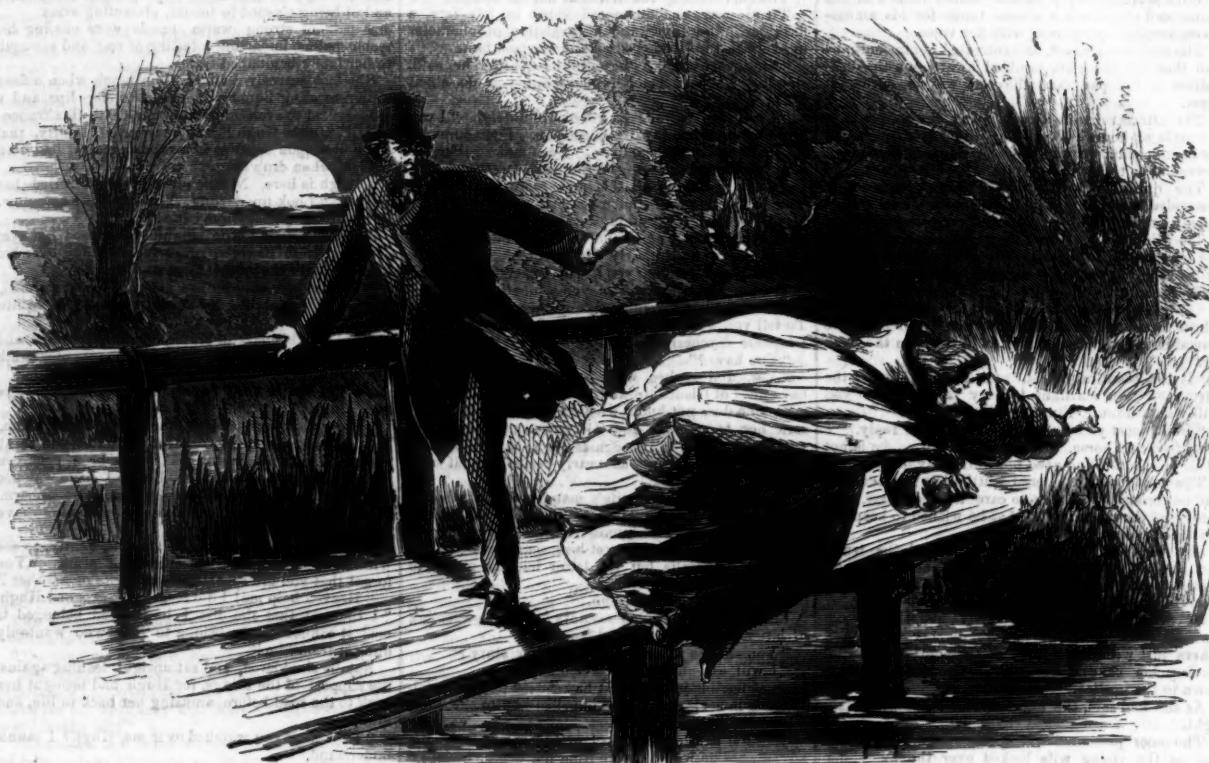
"San Dominic, my master, Abdalla is a strange man, but yet, I think, a Moor."

"But do you suspect anything?"

The night wind played with the thick foliage, and the words that Pedro spoke in reply were borne away upon its bosom, but the Knight of Leon caught them, and he gazed into Pedro's face in wonder. His own mind ran back into the history of the past, and he thought carefully upon what he had heard.

An exclamation burst from his lips, and once more he moved on; but it was a long time before he spoke to his esquire again.

(To be continued.)



THE HOUSE OF SECRETS.

By LEON LEWIS.

CHAPTER XXXV.

What need I fear of thee?
But yet I'll make assurance doubly sure,
And take a bond of fate: thou shalt not live;
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,
And sleep in spite of thunder.

Shakespeare.

It trembled on the young wife's tongue to inform the earl that the air was equally unpleasant to her, yet that she had endured it at his command, but she conquered herself, and conducted him upstairs in silence.

The earl observed with satisfaction how languid were her movements, and, after entering the drawing-room, he regarded her face more closely.

It had lost nothing of its beauty, but had acquired a delicacy that testified that something was surely sapping her life at its foundations. Her blue eyes had an unnatural lustre, her cheeks were deathly pale, save where stained with a scarlet flush, and the purple veins showed distinctly upon her temples through the more than ever transparent skin.

Convinced that a farther residence of a few weeks at the Fens would utterly wreck her young life, the earl determined that she should remain there.

His manner, however, was not in the least conciliatory as he closed the drawing-room door behind them, and said, harshly:

"Be kind enough to inform me, madam, what you meant by your threatening letter of a week since."

"I meant what I said," answered the young wife, plucking up spirit. "Had I not reason to threaten you? Have you treated me well? Oh, Elmer, Elmer!"

Her voice broke down in sobs.

There had been a time—in those early days at the cottage near Aston Grange—when Natalie's sobs would have been hushed on her husband's breast, and her tears wiped away with kisses; but that time was for ever past.

Her tears now annoyed and irritated the earl, and he said, impatiently:

"Do be sensible, Natalie. No one has ill-treated you. Your duty is obedience to your husband—blind, unhesitating obedience—and I shall be satisfied with nothing less! I should not have answered your ill-judged letter, or come near you, at all, if I had expected to find you in this mood. I delayed coming

AN INTENDED MURDER.]

until to-day, simply to teach you that I am your master as well as husband, and I expected to find you in a proper state of penitence for having ventured to threaten me!"

Natalie was astonished at the attitude taken by the earl, and her eyes flashed with indignation as she answered:

"It is you who should be penitent, Vane Templecombe! Is it unnatural that I should rebel at the treatment you have bestowed upon me? I am willing to yield a proper obedience to your wishes and commands, but I can only do so as an acknowledged wife."

"You will be acknowledged in good time, Natalie. You require considerable study—"

The young wife interrupted him by a gesture.

"Study!" she repeated, scornfully. "I have lain aside those stupid books never to look into them again. I know it is not necessary that I should study college-books to fit myself to enter society even as Lady Templecombe. Do not tell me that it is, for my common sense has awakened at last, and the time would be wasted. I am willing to learn all womanly accomplishments, though," she added, her voice softening, "if you will supply me with an acknowledged wife."

"I intended doing so, Natalie, but I have been greatly occupied, and, besides, I have not found a lady suitable for the position!"

"That is because you have not tried!"

The earl flushed uneasily, and responded:

"It shall be my first care to do so when I leave you. Within a week a governess shall be domiciled at the Fens."

"She will find it exceedingly lonely here," interposed the young wife, ironically, "for I shall not be here, and old Elspeth and her grand-daughter might not be deemed pleasant companions."

"You will not be here?"

"Certainly not," and Natalie arched her brows in affected surprise. "Can you wish me to remain here, Elmer, when you see how thin I am grown? I have a constant headache, too, and a dread of illness. This air is laden with disease."

"Fancy! more fancy!" cried her husband. "Such as would better become a nervous middle-aged invalid than a healthy young country girl like yourself!"

"Have you noticed no change in my appearance?"

To this direct demand the earl replied evasively, and finished by expressing his surprise that Natalie should have yielded to such fancies.

"I never used to have 'nervous fancies,'" replied

the wife, sadly. "Before I came here I was healthy enough. Why, Elmer, the air here is so pestilential that nearly all the inmates of the Fens have died young. You cannot wish me to remain under such circumstances—unless you wish me dead!"

She looked at him keenly as she uttered the last sentence, and his guilty flush gave her a terrible pang.

"I am surprised at you, Natalie," said the earl. "I can hardly believe that you are the submissive wife I brought to this place. Such conduct as yours can only injure your cause, for it depends entirely upon yourself whether I ever recognize you or not!"

"You have not acted in good faith with me, Elmer. You pretended that you owned the Fens, when you did not. You placed me in a false position at the outset, and I might have been turned out upon the moor any night by old Elspeth, who, in expelling me, would have but been obeying her master's orders. If you had loved me how could you have treated me in such a manner?"

"I own that I was thoughtless, Natalie," remarked the earl, soothingly. "The truth is, I borrowed this place of an intimate friend, to whom I confessed our secret marriage, and he urged me to bring you here, the spot being so secluded. I passed it off as my own, thinking you would be better contented here. I own frankly that I have done wrong, but I throw myself upon your generosity, Natalie. I have hired the place for a year. For my sake, you will remain, won't you, dearest?"

Natalie replied in the negative.

"I urge you by your wifely love, and your nuptial vows."

"Those vows apply equally to yourself. You promised to love and cherish me till death should part us. If I obey you and remain here, that parting will soon come. I must consider my own health. I shall go with you to-day, or, if you refuse to take me, I shall follow you."

The earl bit his lips and was silent.

He did not wish to farther exasperate his young wife, and he was fully determined that she should remain at the Fens.

"We will let the subject rest awhile, Natalie," he said, after a thoughtful pause. "Let me see how you have improved your time here. Can you play any of the new tunes I sent you?"

The wife replied in the affirmative, and begged him to come up to her room and judge of her improvement.

The invitation was accepted, and they went upstairs together.

With reviving hope, Natalie seated herself at the piano, and played a few simple tunes for his amusement, accompanying them with her voice.

The earl was pleased, and entreated her to continue, and then his thoughts rambled away upon the difficulties in his path, and the best way to surmount them.

The afternoon wore slowly away, the earl taking a couple of hours' sleep upon his wife's couch, the air making him drowsy, and no decision had been arrived at as to Natalie's future.

The question yet remained open when they descended to the dinner-table, where they were waited upon by the again obsequious and garrulous old dame.

They lingered long over the repast, neither husband nor wife conversing much. When they had concluded and retired to the now lighted drawing-room, his lordship said:

"Suppose we take a walk out of doors, Natalie. Those three solemn candles on the mantelpiece are dismal enough. We can talk more freely in the fresh air."

"It is a beautiful night," said Natalie, lifting the curtain. "The starlight is very brilliant. If you will wait a minute, Elmer, I will get ready."

"I will meet you on the portico," was the reply. "I must feed that horse. This playing the groom is not at all pleasant. You need not hurry, my dear."

The young wife wondered a little that his lordship had not brought someone to care for his horse, and suspected the reason to be that he wished to keep her existence a secret as possible.

She went up to her room, unloosened the trunk she had so carefully secured that morning, and brought out a white muslin opera-coat, with a small hood, which she drew over her head.

Drawing the cloak carelessly about her, she fastened some blood-red flowers on her breast, and others just within the edges of the dainty hood, and leaving her candles burning on the table, she went down to the portico.

As she had said, the night was brilliant with starlight.

The moor presented a tempting spot for a ramble, and as the young wife looked over the scene her spirits lightened, and she began to conceive it possible that happy days might yet be in store for her.

She was soon joined by the earl, who complimented her upon her appearance, and begged for one of the flowers on her bosom, showing a loverlike interest that tended still farther to awaken the hopes of Natalie.

"Shall we go on the moor, Elmer?" she asked, putting her hand on his arm, and descending the steps with him, "or shall we walk along the road?"

"Neither," he replied. "I have a fancy to look upon the river. The wind has died out, or rather, it comes from the other direction, and the air cannot offend you. I want to talk with you unobserved, and if we go upon the moor we shall be under the range of old Elspeth's observation. Come!"

Natalie shivered, and oddly enough, remembered Linnet's injunction never to go near the river, for demons dwelt there.

Yet she yielded to her husband's wish.

They strolled along the road that ran through the meadows, and approached the river.

The road was broken by the stream running on beyond it, and the only connection was that made by an old and insecure bridge that spanned the water.

"A romantic spot," said the earl, stepping upon the frail plank, and looking at the river. "The water is quite clear, and the shadows of the bridge are very perceptible. I should think you would be content to remain here a year, Natalie—at least, six months."

"I cannot, Elmer. I have already given you my answer to that proposition," replied Natalie firmly.

"Then what will content you? Shall I find you a pleasanter home, and a teacher?"

"No, for I am no longer a child. You thought me learned enough when you married me, and I have not grown stupid since. I make no request of you, my husband. I demand my rights. I demand to be taken home with you to Wycherly Castle, and introduced there as your wife. During the past week I have arrived at a thorough knowledge of your character. I know how weak, proud, and vain you are. I know that when you married me you thought you had entered into an engagement that would be pleasant to tell of when you grew older, and which would not terminate unpleasantly to yourself. I know now that you never had the faintest idea of acknowledging me as your wife—that you thought you would throw me aside when you should tire of me, as you would throw aside an old glove, and that Hugh Faulds would pick me up and treasure me. I know you thought the knowledge of your rank, after I discovered it, would frighten me effectually from you, or that it ought to. I know, too, that you have now not the slightest idea of presenting me to your friends as your countess."

The earl started, and stared at her earnestly.

There was an unwonted spirit in her face, a flashing in her eyes, and a revelation of character in every feature that startled and alarmed him.

"Suppose you have guessed the truth," he said, slowly. "What then? What can you do about it?"

"I can do this," she answered, resolutely. "I can proclaim myself Lady Templecombe. I can summon Hugh Faulds as my champion. I can make public the fact of the abstraction of the leaf in the church register. I can do all this and more, for my fair fame is dear to me. I have reasons now for clearing my name of all imputation of wrong-doing. I do not wish to threaten you, Elmer, but I shall do as I have said, unless you deal fairly with me."

"Who will believe you?" he sneered, his mind ill at ease. "I can proclaim you a lunatic."

"The assertion would only injure yourself, Elmer. To tell you a secret—I have already seen the Lady Leopoldine Wycherly."

"You have?"

"Yes, and spoke with her. She knows that I have need of friendship, and has promised to help me. She does not know where I am now, but I shall seek her to-morrow, and tell her everything. She will believe me—will recognize me as your wife."

Lord Templecombe was nearly beside himself with rage.

He knew from his wife's manner that she spoke truthfully, and he interrupted her by a furious gesture. He had understood from her words that the Lady Leopoldine had not yet been made aware of his relations to Natalie, but the latter had not meant to convey that idea.

A wild impulse seized him. Looking down into her resolute face, with a feeling of bitter and positive hatred, he cried:

"You will go to Leopoldine with your story?"

"I will, and she will believe me."

That terrible impulse had caused him to clutch her arm in a vice-like grip impelled him to the commission of an awful crime.

Without pausing to reflect or even to consider the advantages he would derive from her death, he let go her arm, and, with a quick and sudden movement, pulled her into the river.

Her wild and startled shriek rang out upon the night air, as she fell into the chilling stream, and was followed by another and another, as she felt herself perishing.

Stopping his ears to shut out the dreadful sound, the earl turned and left her to her fate, hastening to the Fens.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

At last I know thee, and my soul,
From all thy arts set free,
Abjures the cold, consummate art
Shrined as a soul in thee.

Sara J. Clarke.

In many ways does the full heart reveal
The presence of the love it would conceal.

Coleridge.

THAT wild despairing shriek of Natalie as she sank into the dark river reached the ears of one who would have sacrificed his life for her, and who hastened to her rescue.

Her cries had quite died out before help came, and her form had floated under and beyond the frail bridge, the starlight beaming full upon her upturned face, making her appear already deprived of life.

Her senses were in a whirl, so that she scarcely realized the horrors of her situation, after her first agonized look upwards at the cold night-sky.

She felt only a terrible weight pressing down upon her brain, and a sensation of falling that made her clutch blindly and frantically at the unstable water, and gasp convulsively for breath.

In the brief minute that followed she lived over, as the drowning always do, the events of her past.

She seemed to see again the grim, cold face of her grandmother, and to hear Mrs. Alton's words of bitter reproach; and her Uncle Aleck's face arose before her with a mocking smile.

And then she seemed to see her high-born sister regarding her with tender pity, the faces of Miss Wycherly, Farmer Perkins, his wife, and that of her husband, all mingled in one confused picture.

Suddenly from the chaos of her mind one face stood out prominent, the face of Hugh Faulds.

"Oh, Hugh, Hugh!" murmured the drowning girl, and then her consciousness went from her with the utterance of his name.

She heard, although indistinctly, a sound upon the wooden bridge, then a quickplash, as of someone leaping from it into the water, then swift strokes, as if a strong and vigorous swimmer were coming to her rescue.

Then all was blankness.

When consciousness began to return to her she

had a delicious sensation of lying upon the ground and of being clasped in tender, protecting arms.

A pair of strong warm hands were clasping her feeble palms, imparting a feeling of rest and strength to her lately benumbed frame.

She had scarcely realized thus much when a flask of invigorating liquor was placed to her lips, and a voice called to arouse her from her death-like trance.

"Oh, Hugh, Hugh!" she murmured, faintly, that name first upon her lips in awakening, as it had been the last when drowning.

"Hugh is here, Natalie, dear Natalie!" cried her rescuer. "Look up, darling. You are quite safe now. I will protect you with my life!"

The earl's young wife languidly unclosed her eyes—to see Hugh Faulds' honest face bending over her with a look of the most intense anxiety!

"Thank heaven, you are saved!" he exclaimed, fervently. "Natalie, I feared you were quite gone!"

He placed his flask of brandy again to her lips, and the powerful liquor diffused a pleasant sense of warmth through the girl's frame, and she murmured:

"I feel better now. How did you happen to be here, Hugh?"

"Did you think I did not know where you were, Natalie?" he asked, reproachfully. "Did you think you were hidden from me? I have been near you all the time you were at the Fens! I have watched over you, fearing that you might come to some harm. Was it not well I did? My love and devotion have had sufficient reward."

"Hugh, Hugh!" interposed the girl, gently, as she withdrew herself from his encircling arms. "You forget that you are speaking to the wife of another!"

"Heaven help me! I did forget it!" groaned Hugh. "I thought that the life I had saved belonged to me! It cannot surely belong to him who wantonly flung it from him!"

Natalie shuddered, and sat upright, leaning against the support of the bridge, for Hugh had brought her back to the road before arousing her back to life, and said:

"How have you watched over me, Hugh? I cannot understand."

"Natalie, when you left the neighbourhood of Wycherly Castle, in company with your husband, I witnessed your departure. If you had but looked about you at the railway station, you would have seen me upon the platform. Some mysterious instinct took me there, and I was rewarded for going by seeing you. You were veiled, you remember, but your every movement betrayed your identity to me. And then I saw your husband, in company with another gentleman. I watched him, learned to what place he purchased his ticket, and I followed his example, buying a similar ticket! He brought you to Careford, and to the Fens. I followed as nearly as I dared, coming within sight of the house, and then I started to go back to the town with the intention of remaining there in order to be near you. I missed my way upon the moor, having wandered from the road in my self-absorption, and finally came upon a deserted cottage, standing in the midst of a flower-garden that had run wild."

"Mount Rose!" said Natalie.

"You know its name, then? I made up my mind to take possession of it, and I did so without delay. You came there once with a crazed girl—at least, I thought her crazed—and I looked out at you from the window."

"I saw you."

"I know you did, and I feared that you recognized me. I quitted the cottage by a window, and concealed myself in the back garden until after your departure."

"I did not suspect it was you whom I beheld," said Natalie. "And you stayed there to be near me?"

"I remained there a great deal of the time, and nearly every night came to the Fens and watched your light burning dimly in your room. Once or twice I slept in that dilapidated cottage on the premises, and several times I was near enough to see you when you took your morning rambles."

"Faithful friend!" murmured the girl, pressing his hand.

"Oh, Natalie!" he exclaimed, eagerly, "if you had known how I loved you and have always loved you, do you think there ever was a time when you would have married me?"

"I do not know that it is right for me to answer such a question," answered the earl's wife; "but I will do so. There was a time in my life, Hugh, when any token of affection would have won my heart. My life was lonely and utterly desolate. I was worse than alone among my friends. No one cared for me. No one can ever know the bitterness of that period of my life. If you had come to me then with words of love, I might have loved you."

Hugh Faulds groaned with anguish.

"I thought you always knew how I loved you," he said; "I never spoke of my love until the night you

left the Grange, but your grandmother had guessed my secret."

"I almost hated you that night when grandmother informed me that you were 'willing' to marry me. I could not understand your condescension."

"Your grandmother did not deliver my message in that style, I hope!" cried Hugh Fauld, crimsoning with shame and anger. "Oh, Natalie, I offered you my love with as much humility as if I had knelt before the shrine of a saint. I had little hope that you would condescend to me who am so plain and old, while you are so young and beautiful."

"Let us not talk of it," said the girl, in a pained tone. "We cannot recall the past. We have now to deal with the present."

Hugh Fauld made a great effort to subdue the anguish and regret awakened by Natalie's words, and then he said:

"You are right, Nattie. Let us talk of the present. Last night I stayed at the housekeeper's cottage at the Fens, and I remained there to-day, hoping to find courage to speak with you. I noticed how pale and thin you were growing, under the influence of the bad air, and I knew you ought not to remain here longer. Yet I feared to make known my presence lest you should send me away. At noon your husband came. I watched you this evening as you came out towards the river, and followed you half the distance, impelled by an influence I could not understand. It was well I came. I saw you go on to the bridge, and, after a time, I saw your husband push you into the water—"

"Don't, Hugh!" cried Natalie, in a tone made sharp by anguish. "I cannot hear you say it."

"Is it not true, then, that he sought your death?"

The young wife bowed assent, and then burst into sobs and tears.

"Do you love him still, Natalie?"

"No, Hugh. The love I once felt for him has vanished. I almost hate him now. I despised him before for his weakness and want of principle, but now I loathe him."

"Then you will never want to see him again. Let me take you to my home, or to some pleasant spot where you will learn to forget him."

The girl shook her head, and said, resolutely, wiping her tears from her pale cheeks:

"Hugh, I am still his wife, and I claim recognition at his hands. I shall not rest until he shall have done me justice, and then I will turn my back upon him for ever. I do not love him, and he does not love me, but I shall compel him to acknowledge me as his wife. I cannot listen to any counsel to rest contented with a tarnished name."

She concluded with a shiver, and her teeth chattered with the cold, consequent upon her involuntary bath.

"Take some more of the brandy, Nattie," said Hugh, putting the flask to her lips. "That will take off your chill. You ought to have dry garments immediately."

"Where shall I find them? I dare not return to the Fens."

"I will go with you. Your husband will not dare to lay his finger upon you while I am with you. Come, Natalie. The sooner we go the better."

He assisted the girl to her feet, but her limbs trembled so that she could not sustain herself.

With a reverent care, as though he had been her father, Hugh Fauld raised her in his arms, and set out for the Fens.

She was not a heavy burden, and he was strong. He carried her as easily as if she had been an infant, and mentally wished that the way was twice as long.

Linger as he would, the house was soon reached.

As he paused upon the portico, placing her upon her feet, they heard a sound as of retreating wheels, and both knew that Lord Templecombe had gone—with the conviction that his young wife was sleeping in the river-bed.

Natalie trembled so that Hugh was obliged to support her into the house and upstairs to the drawing-room door.

"Go in there," she said, in a whisper. "I will come to you as soon as I can. Have you no dry clothes, Hugh? There must be some in the house."

"I am not afraid of getting cold. I am only a rough farmer, you know, Nattie, and used to being wet. I will exercise myself by walking about the room till you come back. Shall I help you to your room?"

Natalie declined, and went slowly and painfully up to her chamber.

The candles still burned upon the table, her trunk still lay open as she had left it, but everything had a strange look to the poor girl.

She laid aside the white opera-cloak and hood, noticing, notwithstanding her grief, how its purity

was stained by the river-water; drew from her hair and bosom the red blossoms with which, in her innocent vanity, she had adorned herself, and disrobed.

Then she retired to her bath-room, from which, in due time, she emerged, looking physically refreshed, and robed herself anew in the soft blue dress that had been given her by the Lady Leopoldine.

She put back her pale golden hair, brushing out its rippling waves, like one who has done for ever with the vanities of this world, wrapped about her a fleecy Shetland shawl, and then knelt down to pray.

Not a word issued from her pale lips as she knelt there. It seemed to her that her grief and wrongs were all known, and that words were unnecessary to convey to heaven her desire for more than human comfort and sympathy.

Gradually, a sensation of peace stole over her wounded heart. The waves of her grief were stilled, and she felt as though a silent benediction had been breathed upon her.

She arose from her knees comforted and strengthened. The rigid lines about her mouth had relaxed, and her face had become more gentle in its expression.

Then she went down to the drawing-room.

Hugh Fauld was walking up and down the room, but as she opened the door he came forward and took her hand, saying:

"You look better, Nattie. I think you have been receiving better comfort than I could give you."

He led her forward to an arm-chair, seated her, and then resumed his pacing to and fro, pausing now and then to regard the girl with a strange expression.

"I fear you will take cold, Hugh," said Natalie, at length breaking the silence, and speaking in an anxious tone.

Hugh Fauld bestowed upon her a tender smile that illuminated his plain face, making it positively handsome for the moment, and answered:

"There is no danger, Nattie. I have fortified myself with brandy, and feel quite warm. My garments are nearly dry, too, and the night is almost sultry. You need have no fears on my account. Are you sure you are beyond danger of taking cold?"

Natalie replied in the affirmative.

Hugh walked across the floor again restlessly, and then stopped abruptly in front of the girl, and said:

"Natalie, what is your husband's name? I heard that the Fens belonged to Sir Wilton Werner. Is he your husband?"

"No, Hugh," responded the earl's wife, with a look of pain. "My husband simply hired this place. Let him be to you only Elmer Keyes. I do not wish you to know his name. I would not like you to meet or know him after to-night's occurrence!"

Natalie replied in the affirmative.

Hugh walked across the floor again restlessly, and then stopped abruptly in front of the girl, and said:

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Natalie replied in the affirmative.

"You are sure you do not love him now?"

"Love him, Hugh—when he denies our marriage, when he ill-treats and refuses to own me, when he even sought to murder me!" cried Natalie, with a shudder, and a look of loathing. "I would as soon love a deadly serpent. I did love him—oh, how much! I would have died for him. I thought him noble and good and true. But I cannot continue to love him I have discovered to be so bad. I know him as he is, and despise him!"

A look of joy overspread the face of Hugh Fauld, but it instantly disappeared, and was succeeded by an expression of sorrow.

"I can understand the bitterness of your awakening to the truth, dear Natalie," he said. "Would that the knowledge had come before your marriage! Tell me what you intend to do."

"I shall leave the Fens in the morning, Hugh, and go back to the neighbourhood of Wycherly Castle. Elmer will have gone back there, and I shall be near him."

"I will not combat your wishes, my child, nor will I seek to penetrate what you wish to keep hidden. But you will let me know your whereabouts, I hope!"

Natalie shook her head.

"It is best not," she said. "I shall be with true and good friends, Hugh, and you can surely trust my discretion!"

The latter clause appealed to Hugh Fauld, as having some right over her destiny, and he so understood it, experiencing a sudden thrill of joy that he was something to her.

"Certainly, Natalie," he said, gravely. "I can trust your discretion. If you have found friends who can assist you more than I could do, you have chosen well to confide in them in preference to me."

"You will not doubt my friendship for you?" questioned the earl's young wife, timidly.

"I will never doubt it now, Nattie. But as the

question of your immediate movements is decided, I had better proceed at once to Carefort, and return in the morning with a fly for you. You had better retire without delay, so as to be well rested in the morning."

"You will not go without sharing my supper, Hugh? I am mistress here, and I could not commit such a breach of hospitality as to let you go without having had something to eat. You will stay?"

Hugh yielded to her solicitations, and Natalie touched the bell-cord.

Her summons was answered by Linnet.

The mistress of the Fens gave a few directions to the girl to be transmitted to old Elspeth, and Linnet then withdrew.

A few minutes later the supper-bell sounded, and Hugh Fauld, with as much courtesy as though he had been of noble birth, offered his arm to the earl's wife, and they descended to the dining-room.

The low and pleasant apartment was lighted by a dozen wax candles, in porcelain sconces; the damask curtains were drawn, but the windows were open to admit the fresh air from the moor; and the round table was drawn to the centre of the room, and liberally supplied with delicacies.

Hugh Fauld handed Natalie to her seat, and then deliberately closed the windows, and took a place at the table opposite her own.

"The evening air is not pure, and consequently not good for you," he said. "You want to be very careful of yourself, Nattie, after your recent exposure!"

He started as he observed old Elspeth for the first time.

She was busy at the side-board, her back to the table, and had not yet noticed him.

"I spoke thoughtlessly and imprudently," he said, in a very low tone.

"No one heard you but me, Hugh," responded Natalie. "The housekeeper is almost stone-deaf. I am obliged to write most of my directions to her, although at times her hearing improves!"

"Can it be that your husband left you in this gloomy place with no companions excepting a deaf old woman and a crazed girl?" exclaimed Hugh Fauld, in astonishment. "But I should be surprised at nothing after what I witnessed to-night!"

Natalie blushed deeply, and did not reply.

At that moment Linnet put her head in at the door, and Natalie summoned her to her side, requesting her to bring a pot of tea.

When the girl had gone on her errand to the side-board, Natalie remarked:

"Linnet can make her grandmother comprehend when no one else can, and she does not speak loudly."

In this case the daft girl seized the tea-urn, and pointed at the table, and old Elspeth hastened to obey the mute direction, quickly bringing the tea to Natalie.

"My lord is gone," she said, with her old garrulousness.

"He said he'd make it all right with Sir Wilton, my lady, and I hope he will. The house was all ready when he came back from his walk with you, and he told me he'd left you down by the bridge walking, and that you were very down-hearted, because he was obliged to go to-night. He drove off right smart, as if he was in a great hurry to catch the train at Carefort."

The earl's wife bowed, and poured out the tea, hoping that Hugh had not heard the title applied to herself.

He had heard it, however, but attached no importance to it.

"My lord didn't say that a friend of his had come," remarked old Elspeth, regarding her mistress's visitor wonderingly; "and I didn't hear any carriage drive up."

"The gentleman walked here," said Natalie, loudly.

"Ah, yes; he came horseback, and left the animal at the gate," said Elspeth, nodding approvingly. "It's a pity he should a-missed my lord. I suppose your ladyship knows who he is?" she added, remembering her master's warning against tramps.

Natalie bowed assent.

With a sigh of relief, the old housekeeper returned to her side-board.

The supper was at length finished, and Hugh conducted Natalie to the drawing-room, and prepared for his departure.

"I shall be here at an early hour in the morning, Natalie," he said. "There is a down train which leaves Carefort at ten. I shall be here, therefore, soon after seven—in time to breakfast with you. You had better retire directly. Heaven bless you, my child!"

He endeavoured to speak in a paternal manner, but his glances were those of the unhappy and despairing lover who strives to conceal his grief.

The earl's wife gave him her hand, and he respect-

fully pressed his lips upon it, and then bade her good-night.

The next moment he descended the stairs and quitted the Fens, setting out for Carefort.

And Natalie retired to her own rooms to think over the terrible event of the evening, and to battle with the grief which refused longer to be repressed.

(To be continued.)

PEN BRADSHAWE.

"Yes, sir—yes, Mr. Clive Soulard, I've made up my mind. If you are bent on marrying a woman who doesn't care one fig for you, you're at liberty to do so."

"Very well, Pen."

Mr. Clive Soulard spoke very quietly, and bent his handsome eyes on the excited girl with an expression of mingled nonchalance and amusement.

"I don't consider it very well, Mr. Soulard," she went on, nestled by his quietude. "It may be well for you, who marry me for my money, and so get all you want. It's not well for me, who get nothing in return for all I give up. It's bad, and wicked, and cruel, and you know it."

"Ah? Indeed, Pen, I was not aware that the advantages of this arrangement were not mutual. I am sure, I supposed it a purely business matter on both sides."

"To be sure, but you have everything to gain, and I everything to lose."

The shadow of a flush arose in Clive Soulard's cheek, but it was gone before Penelope Bradshawe saw it, and she answered, in the light, careless tone he had used all along :

"If you mean by gain that I give up poverty for wealth, the misery of bachelorthood for married blessedness, I don't know but you're right as to that, but even then what do I gain that you don't? You can have the money without me, more than I can have the money without you, and really, Pen, if you are lovely as a Peri, I think I may lay some claim to the good looks of Antinous, eh, Pen?" running his slender white fingers through the halo of bronze brown curls that crowned his handsome head, and sending a laughing glance into the mirror opposite, that reflected a face beautiful almost as a woman's.

"Tush," said Pen, colouring with impatience, "I don't think this is any time to talk nonsense and make fun."

"Perhaps not," he replied, with a hopelessly comical sigh, "but I can't help being jolly, dear; it isn't every day one gets a fortune and a wife in a breath, and without the trouble of asking for either."

"You haven't got the wife yet, Clive Soulard, and if you were a man you wouldn't take her on such conditions."

"Conditions? I didn't know there were any. It's the money is conditional, not the wife."

Poor Pen was ready to cry with vexation. The handsome, provoking fellow only laughed at her, what she said.

She might protest as much as she liked against the match which her uncle had planned so arbitrarily, making the inheritance of his money conditional on these two marrying. Clive Soulard only laughed at her, and made jesting responses to all her appeals.

Penelope Bradshawe had been brought up as the adopted child and expectant heiress of her uncle, Reese Bradshawe. A year before, this uncle had died, leaving a will, which was not to be opened till he had been dead twelvemonths.

That will being read at the appointed time, proved to contain the somewhat arbitrary dictum that his beloved niece should not have his money without she married his beloved cousin, Clive Soulard, the said Clive being still single at the opening of the will.

Pen Bradshawe was an exceedingly pretty girl, but contrary, captious and self-willed, as pretty girls are apt to be, and she frowned in the most decided manner upon the unexpected tenor of her uncle's will. If he had given Clive half the property she wouldn't have minded, but to force her to make her choice between poverty and Clive—to oblige a saucy little flirt like her to marry anybody—was abominable.

She forgot, even in her own mind, to add to the sum of her grievances on the subject the fact that the provoking will cut short the most delightful little flirtation Miss Pen had ever indulged in.

She had known Clive all her life; indeed, they were distant cousins, and Clive had spent a good share of his boyhood, and most of his vacations, during school and college days, at Uncle Bradshawe's house, where pretty Pen alternately potted and plagued the life out of him.

It was bad enough to be snubbed and coaxed by so pretty a girl as Pen while he was in jackets and she in pinafores, but to have such a state of things continue—well, it was so highly unpleasant to Mr. Clive Soulard that he could not conceal his ex-

ultation at the turn which was necessarily given to affairs by the terms of Uncle Reese's will.

He at once dropped the suppliant air, and became nonchalant, careless, and at his ease—provokingly so, one must allow, under the circumstances. Pen Bradshawe could scarcely be blamed for not liking the tables turned upon her in this summary manner.

She persisted that she didn't like Clive one bit, not in that way, but she couldn't give up her heiress-ship and be a poor sewing girl like Kitty Bryce, or a music-teacher like Ellen Steele, or, in short, be poor at all, and so she told Clive she'd marry him just for that one reason, and no other. If he had a mind to take her, knowing she didn't love him, and never expected to, and that she thought it a shameful piece of business altogether—a cruel conspiracy against a poor girl who couldn't help herself—why, he could.

For her part, she should be afraid to marry anybody that felt towards her as she did towards Clive Soulard, &c., studying to say whatever she judged was best calculated to provoke her prospective spouse out of that sorry nonchalance he had only so lately assumed.

But Clive was not to be provoked. He assured Pen that it made no sort of difference her not loving him—the money was the main object—which assurance, strangely enough, did not comfort Pen a particle, or make her one whit more resigned to her fate. He utterly declined withdrawing his claim either to the money or Pen.

The possession of the former being conditional upon taking the latter, how could he? he gravely questioned. Pen thought, if he were not utterly selfish, instead of forcing her into marrying a man she didn't like, he would refuse to fulfil the condition of the will himself, and so generously bestow upon her the property and her freedom at the same time.

But Clive disclaimed all pretensions to unselfishness, and candidly told her if she had such an invincible repugnance to marrying him, she had better give up the property, and secure her freedom at the same time.

He thought it would be a pity to marry a man she disliked so much as she seemed to do. Now with him it was different. He didn't dislike Pen, by any means; he was rather thankful, on the whole, that dear old Uncle Reese hadn't thrown Ann Thompson in his way instead of Pen Bradshawe; he could think of plenty of worse incumbencies to a fine property like that than Pen.

Vastly consoling this style of talk, was it not? Was he laughing at her, or was he in earnest? Had he only been playing with her all that past time, when he seemed to live on her smiles—when a frown or a petulant word would make him apparently the most wretched of men? or had he (oh! most heartrending supposition) the money in view all the time, and only sought her to secure that?

It looked like it certainly—this sudden assumption of indifference to her pleasure; this open exultation to the terms of her uncle's will.

Pen, the beautiful, the bewitching, the tantalizing, was quite nonplussed. If she really thought, if she were positively certain, that he wasn't doing this to plague her, that he didn't care for anything but the money, she wouldn't have him to save his life; she'd go off and be a governess, or take in sewing for a living before she would marry him.

No, she wouldn't either; in that case she'd have him out of spite.

In short, besides having a natural shrinking from sewing for a living, Pen, consciously or otherwise, did not dislike her future spouse quite to the extent she pretended.

Somewhere in her capricious heart there was a soft place for Clive Soulard all the time.

He was so handsome, so graceful, all the other girls were in love with him if she were not.

And so the weeks wore away till the wedding-day; Clive, light-hearted, careless, laughing, banteringly sympathetic, ten times as handsome and agreeable as he had ever been, but not in the least lover-like—anything but that; Pen, sulky and saucy by turns, but really miserable, and secretly, for a reason she could not confess to herself, but much less to Mr. Clive Soulard.

Pen, the invincible, was in love at last, and of all men—with Clive Soulard. If Clive suspected it, he kept his suspicions to himself, and never, by any chance, dropped word or look that could be construed as symptomatic of the tender passion.

The change in Pen Bradshawe since the reading of her uncle's will was too marked not to be apparent. People commented variously upon it. Some pitied her for being compelled to a marriage so distasteful, others thought, with Clive Soulard, that if it were distasteful, she alone was to blame if she did not choose the uttermost poverty in preference to it.

Pen, meanwhile, meditating and speculating con-

stantly upon Clive's changed demeanour, concluded at last that he was as indifferent to her as he pretended to be; and she resolved, if nothing occurred before the wedding-day, to refuse then to marry him, whether or no.

She had made all the usual preparations. Her dressing-room was strewn with snowy lace, silk, and muslins; the bridesmaids for the occasion were being duly drilled and otherwise got ready for their part in the approaching ceremony.

The wedding morning came.

Forth from her chamber floated the bride, clad in flowing snow, and surrounded by her bridesmaids, like the queen-rose in a garden of blossoms; forth stepped the bridegroom, handsome, graceful, light of heart, and exultant. Penelope let him take her hand, and lead her forward, without lifting her eyes till they stood at the very altar steps. Then, suddenly, she looked up, first at him, then at the assembled guests, and drawing her hand from him, she said, with slow, deliberate enunciation:

"I cannot do it. Better poverty, better wretchedness, better anything, than such a marriage as this. I have changed my mind. Good friends, it is a pity to disappoint you, but there will be no wedding to-day."

So saying, she glided through the astonished groups and left them staring breathlessly after her.

The luckless bridegroom knew not what to say, or to do, or where to look. He was taken at a disadvantage; wounded full sore at a point where, being tender, but unsuspecting, he had not sufficiently guarded himself.

Was it the mortification, the slight, the being so publicly rejected by so lovely a girl as Pen Bradshawe?

Or did his very innocent heart quail with fear at the thought of losing, after all, a woman who, with all her coquettish frivolousness, was worth more to him than all other women together—than twenty fortunes like the one she forfeited to him by refusing to become his wife?

Certainly Clive Soulard's handsome face had suddenly taken the hue of death, and his voice was unsteady, as he tried to murmur something that sounded like a confused apology or explanation of this strange *contretemps*.

The guests fell into little whispering knots, the clergymen who was to have officiated looked confounded, and the bridal attendants stole half-frightened, curious glances at Clive Soulard, who, with his eyes downcast, and his whole appearance expressive of the agitated conflict going on within him, stood struggling vainly to recall his self-possession.

Presently he drew nearer the clergymen, said something inaudible to others, and with a half-deprecatory glance, left the room.

In a stupification scarcely less than his, Penelope had managed somehow to reach her own chamber again, and was sitting amid the chaotic array of bridal gear that strewed the room, when a timid knock sounded at her door.

All her energies rallied at the sound.

Pausing deliberately to rouge her white cheeks, she waited for a second knock, and opened the door.

It was Clive himself who stood there, pallid yet resolute, agitated but determined.

Fire seemed to flash from his handsome eyes as they met hers; his nostrils quivered and dilated.

He looked his true self—manly, not easily baffled this time.

It was on Pen's lips to say, in the assurance of the triumph she felt to be hers—"Oh, it is you, is it?" but, instead, she caught at the door unsteadily, and said:

"Oh, Clive! Clive!"

"Do you love me, Pen? That is what I came for—what I will know."

"You haven't any right to ask me, Clive, after—all you've said and done to make me think you didn't care a straw for me or anything but the money," said Pen, falteringly.

"I was foolish, trying to pay off old scores, that's all. I love you better than my life, Pen. If you're not going to share it with me, I'll make a bonfire of Uncle Reese's fortune and shoot myself afterwards. Will you come now?"

Perhaps that particular bevy of wedding-guests waiting below never experienced a profounder sensation than when the drawing-room door opened again and Mr. Clive Soulard marched in with the look of a conquering hero, conducting Pen Bradshawe, blushing, smiling and tearful, but evidently glad and willing.

They walked straight to the old place, the minister managed to keep his senses under the most trying circumstances, the words were said—the twain made one; and if one might judge from the expression of the eye and countenance, two happier people than these never wore matrimonial chains.

C. G.



THE ROYAL CATHEDRAL, ST. PETERSBURG.]

THE RUSSIAN IMPERIAL WEDDING.

For the first time, perhaps, in the world's history the people of England are really interested in a Russian Imperial marriage. All eyes are turned towards St. Petersburg, where so recently was solemnized, with all the pomp and circumstance of Russian Imperialism and the almost Oriental ceremonial of the Greek Church, the marriage of our Princess of Wales's pretty sister Dagmar with his Imperial Highness the "Lord Successor" to all the Russias. From a funeral to a wedding is both a natural and an every-day event. It is not, however, without a tinge of sadness that our mind reverts to the Imperial youth, the first betrothed of the Princess Dagmar, the elder brother of her present husband, who so suddenly and so unexpectedly was called upon to exchange one of the fairest daughters of Denmark for a premature tomb and a terrestrial for a celestial crown.

Against this speedy transfer of the pretty Princess from the elder to the younger brother, his *next successor*, there has been some few hard things said by our literary brethren, and we ourselves confess to the weakness of a slight superstitious qualm when we recall to mind the succession of bluff—perhaps, more correctly speaking, brutal—King Hal, the eighth of his name, to his elder brother's wife, and inheritance of the throne of England; but "Time changes all things." Princes cannot play the pranks they were wont to do "once on a time," nor even sovereigns who are the *beau ideal* of despotism marry many wives with impunity; for in any country, even "all the Russias," the *roy populi* has some weight. Further, we might say, that *holy as is* and should be the tie that binds man and wife, princes are the children and servants of nations, and should (all sentiment apart) marry for their especial benefit; or to speak very plainly, abdicate their dignities, for clear it is, as proven by all history, that kings cannot be kings and private persons at the same time.

Then again, apart from all dynastic reasons, we would ask these croakers against the marriage of the heir of the Romanoffs and the Princess Dagmar, why the union of this handsome youth and beautiful girl should not be attended with all the blessings that we ourselves wish them. And should our fair readers still feel a little shocked at this transfer of the affections from one brother to another, let us remind them that the first betrothal was not what they would consider a pure love-affair, as we regard it in private life, and

clearly, having lost her first *affiance*, the royal young lady had as good a right to contract another marriage as the humblest of her father's subjects; and if so, why not with the present prince?

Before the Princess could become the wife of the heir to the Russian throne it was necessary that she should make profession of the Greek religion. Thus on the 24th of October the fair young convert, robed in white without a jewel or hair-ornament, was conducted by the Czar himself, and kneeling in the "Trapezia," or outer porch of the Palace Chapel at St. Petersburg, she was questioned in the faith by the Metropolitan of Novgorod. Being up in her catechism, she was duly received, touched with the cross, decorated with the pink ribbon of confirmation, and then led by the Czarina to the high altar to kiss the images and receive the Eucharist. Then mass was sung, and the "Orthodox Princess," with "his Highness the Lord Successor to the Throne," stood together in the choir, and condescended to receive the congratulations of the clergy.

Two days afterwards the betrothal was celebrated in the same place, with even greater stateliness. The Czar of all the Russias handed the illustrious bride to the dais, where there stood a desk with the Gospels and the crucifix. Two rings, as is the Russian custom, were laid on golden salvers upon the altar, which, borne with vast solemnity to the Metropolitan, and by him duly blessed, were placed on the respective fingers of the Lord Successor and the Orthodox Princess. Then the Czarina transferred the marriage symbols thus apposited from each to each, at which moment the artillery on the quays thundered a salute of fifty-one guns, and St. Petersburg broke out in banners and holiday uproar. Afterwards came a prayer "on behalf of the Orthodox Lord Cesarovich, Grand Duke Alexander Alexandrovitch, and his affianced bride, the Orthodox Lady, Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna," and another for the Royal Family to which thirty-one more guns bellowed the "Amen."

Their Imperial Majesties then "condescended to return to the salon," the Cesarovich "condescending to lead his illustrious bride." These superb descensions were followed by a gorgeous banquet, attended by a Royal Cupbearer and High Marshals of the Table, by "Kammer-Junkers," Dames de Palais, and we know not what.

Then a state ball, festivities, and illuminations all over the capital wound up a day almost as overwhelming, we should think, for the Imperial bride as that of the famous entry into London of her elder sister, our own princess.

To revert to the royal bride's father, it is singular, as an item of history, that within some dozen years a *German* prince—not a Dane, mark you—the younger son of the younger branch of the royal house—*par parenthese*, let us say that King Christian was, by a protocol, that is, a paper, signed in London some years since, appointed to succeed the last of the true Danish kings. Thus he was (and we say it respectfully) by the Danes somewhat sneeringly termed the "Protocol Prince." Let us repeat, then, that it is singular that King Christian should, within so short a time (and by diplomacy, not conquest) have become King of Denmark, "the father of the Danish kings to be," father of the King of Greece, and *maternally*—again to paraphrase Tennyson—the father, in all human probability, of the sovereigns of Russia, India, Great Britain, and Ireland.

By this marriage, then, in all human probability, and the non-intervention of any political and dynastic revolution, a few generations (may this be many, as far as our own royal family is concerned) will see the sovereigns of the greatest empires in Europe—England, Russia, Prussia—all near blood relations; nor should we exclude France, which is connected with Russia. What a wide stride in civilization since the days when the Russian ambassador to the court of Elizabeth, who hunted the wild-boar in Bloomsbury, failing in obtaining the hand of "Bess" for his master (Ivan the Terrible), proposed, and was refused, one of the ladies of her court!

The City of St. Petersburg is one of the most modern and beautiful capitals in Europe, and that, too, albeit on its site in 1703 there were but two huts. From the time, however, of Peter it has been gradually increasing.

Built at the eastern extremity of the Gulf of Finland, at the mouth of the river Neva, it is divided into four comprehensive divisions; viz., the Admiralty, or central quarter; the quarter between the Admiralty and the country to the south and east; the original Petersburg quarter, occupying an insulated tract on the north side; and the Vassili-Ostcoro, another insulated tract to the north of the river.

On the land side St. Petersburg is almost entirely open; but the approach by sea is guarded by the celebrated fort of Cronstadt.

No city in the world can stand a comparison with St. Petersburg in the width and regularity of its streets, or its magnificent buildings. The Neva runs through the city into branches. The southern part of the town, however, is divided, not by branches of the river, but by canals.

The population is estimated only at 600,000.

ROYAL TOMBS.—Excavations of some interest are now going on in the choir of Rouen Cathedral, and, have already brought to light a statue of interest to our country, viz., that of the eldest son of Henry II., King of England and Duke of Normandy. In 1838 the sepulchral statue of Richard Coeur de Lion had been dug up near the same spot, thanks to the researches of the director of the Rouen Museum, M. Deville.

THE WRONG DRESS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Golden Mask," "The Stranger's Secret," "Miss and His Idol," "The Warning Voice," &c., &c.

CHAPTER LV.

As I have said, after the fire, and after Jerome's visit, an ominous silence reigned at Gorewood.

It was like that awful, indescribable calm which pervades all nature before the bursting of a storm—a calm embracing all things from the heavens heavy with clouds down to the lightest leaf upon the tree.

The impression that something was about to happen took violent possession of Sir Gower and his lady, and was not to be shaken off.

Even Jacintha succumbed to the all-pervading melancholy; but then in her case it might readily be accounted for. The recent events at the Abbey were not such as to promote cheerfulness. The ignominious, nay, terrible close of that bright vision in which a share of the earldom of Morant seemed within her grasp, was enough to defeat a woman of the strongest temperament.

The first fulfilment of the idea that something disastrous was about to occur came in the form of an anonymous letter addressed to the baronet.

As a rule, he did not attend to such communications.

No gentleman would do so; but in this case, on opening it, his eye caught at a word or two which could hardly fail to arrest his attention.

The words were these:

"DISTRUST the wily Italian woman who has gained a shameful influence over you. She is playing a subtle and a double game. You think her your only friend—on the contrary, she is your deadliest foe. But she is known and watched. Trust her no longer. Drive her from your doors, unless you are anxious that they should be yours no longer. She knows too much, and trades on what she knows. Ruin hangs over your head—you know that—and it is of her plotting. False, treacherous and wicked, she will one day appear to you in her true colours, as she is known by

A TRUSTY FRIEND."

That was all.

At another time Sir Anselm Gower would have tossed the impudent missive into the fire, but at that juncture it was like vitriol poured on an open wound.

Mistrusting everyone, fearing everyone, what more natural than that these words should induce him to doubt and mistrust his chief counsellor?

Was she false?

Did it result from her treachery that he stood in the position he did?

What had come, what was likely to come, of all her evil counsel?

Reviewing the past from this point, he saw clearly enough that it was to her he owed his first deviation from the path of simple honesty and straightforwardness. And to this he owed all his misery.

To this also he was indebted for his wealth, position, all that he enjoyed; but in that dark hour he forgot his obligations, as a man is sure to do. He thought only of the harm this woman had done him, with not any idea as to the benefit he might have derived from her hands.

As it happened Jacintha had herself added fuel to the fire.

While he pondered over the matter she entered his presence with an open letter in her hand. It was, she said, from Gaspare. He was ill and required her immediate attendance.

This man Sir Anselm regarded with peculiar loathing and detestation, and his suspicions were at once aroused.

"This filial tenderness and devotion are new and beautiful features in your character," he said, with a sneer. "They become you admirably."

The woman looked at him in amazement. She could not credit her ears.

"You are laughing at me?" she demanded. "To what am I indebted for the honour of being made your jest?"

"Indeed. I was never more serious," was the reply. "I have reason to be so."

"Reason?"

"Yes. You propose to leave Gorewood at a crisis when your presence here is of the utmost moment, and you propose to do so on a pretext too transparent for serious consideration."

"I do not understand you."

"Sometimes it is convenient not to do so. Enough that I appreciate your motives at their true value."

"Stay! You are so sarcastic. This humour is not natural to you. Something has happened?"

"True."

"Something to prejudice you, or to awaken doubts of my fidelity to your interests?"

"Marvellous sagacity."

"You are offended because I have not put you in possession of the reason for my abrupt return from the Earl of Morant's?"

"No! But you are ingenuous in surmises. Make one more attempt. Think! Is there no cause for doubt or suspicion likely to have come to my ears? No double dealing on your part that might have created alarm and put me on the defensive?"

"I decline to answer a question which implies an intentional insult. You have known me long and well. You know that I have served you blindly and devotedly."

"It has been to your interest to do so, has it not?"

"Yes; and in that fact you have the strongest guarantee of my fidelity."

"But circumstances change."

"You mean—?"

"That I have received this letter, putting me on my guard against the possibility of surprise. Read it. I should have acted wisely, perhaps, in keeping my suspicions to myself; but the time for acting wisely or unwisely is past. My position is desperate, and I owe it to you that it is so."

An angry scowl clouded the brow of the listener as these words were uttered.

With eyes of flame Jacintha devoured the anonymous missile. Fierce indignation was depicted in every feature of her expressive face. Nevertheless, she read on and on until the end; then, with trembling fingers, she folded the paper in its original creases and returned it, without a word.

"Well?" the baronet exclaimed.

"You ask me my opinion of this?" she returned. "You wish to know the object of this stab in the dark?"

"Yes."

"I will give it you. The writer of that, whom I could name without difficulty, has one and only one object."

"And that is?"

"To shake your confidence in me, and so undermine your faith in the guidance and advice I might tender you. Already, as this anonymous scribe—this masked assassin—knows but too well my vigilance and my counsel, have saved you in moments of extreme peril. Confin'd in me, and I may have the power of repeating that service. Desert me, question me, fail to act on my advice, and then you stand alone. Henceforth the odds are one against one, not as they have been, two against one, and—"

"The second the more dangerous?"

"You are pleased to compliment. However, so far your unknown friend has succeeded. I am ready to take my departure from Gorewood this instant, never to return."

Sir Gower started up in alarm.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed.

"Nay, do you think that I will remain here the object of mistrust and suspicion? No! Great as my interest in your welfare is, I cannot consent to that. Your faith in the statement of this masked ruffian is an insult to me."

"For which I apologize."

"That is unnecessary."

"But I insist. I apologize, humbly, abjectly if you will. Forgive me, Jacintha! The affairs of these few days have driven me beyond the power of self-control. I am not master of myself. I know not whom to trust or to suspect. I beg, I implore you to forget that I have insulted you by these words, and that I ever for one moment entertained a doubt of your perfect devotion and disinterestedness."

Jacintha reflected.

It was a proud moment, this in which she found herself absolute mistress of the position. And her haughty arrogance was equal to it.

"I will give the matter my consideration," she said.

And with an inclination of the head, the pampered dependant sailed from the room.

So ended the affair of the anonymous letter; but that was by no means the termination of Sir Anselm's difficulties.

A singular but unquestionable change came over Gorewood Place.

It was impossible for its owner to live in it and not to feel this—not to feel that some secret influ-

ence was at work there, which hour by hour affected his position and brought the crisis nearer and nearer.

The friends and neighbours who called—and their number was not small—boldly inquired into the cause of his son's abrupt disappearance.

What could he reply?

The excuse of a friendly visit of a few days grew absurd as the time extended, and he could give no particular as to the nature of the visit and its probable duration.

Singular, too, people pressed for these particulars—pressed even rudely, and as they had never done before.

Then, was it fancy, or did the very domestics display a change of manner? Was he deceived in supposing that they grew strangely arrogant and impudent, and that towards Lady Gower especially they were wanting in those obsequious attentions to which she had been accustomed?

Nothing was said, and there was no one act to which the baronet could point as an instance of insubordination or arrogance. But he was conscious of the change, as he was painfully, miserably aware of the hurrying on of everything around him to a climax which meant desperation and ruin.

There lay some mystery at the bottom of all this.

He felt it every moment of the day, but he also felt utterly powerless to contend against it.

One clue, and one only, did he obtain to the change in the conduct of the domestics. By chance he discovered the conduct of the man Davy, whom he had expelled the premium for neglect of duty, was constantly lurking about in the servants' offices, especially at nightfall. Here was something tangible, but it was hard to deal with. To order the man off was easy enough; but then, what did he know? What form did his vindictiveness take? And how far was he in a position to avenge any open act?

Such was the state of things at Gorewood Place during the brief visit Jacintha paid to Gaspare, whom she found in a desperate state of health, and apparently more troubled in mind than in body. Her stay with him would have been protracted, but she was anxious about the baronet's affairs, and therefore hurried home at the expiration of a week.

It was eight when she arrived, and she understood that Sir Anselm was in his private study, his lady having retired to rest.

Orders had been given that he was not to be disturbed on any account: but Jacintha's name was sufficient warrant for disobeying this order, and she was at once admitted. She found Sir Anselm haggard and worn, with fierce, brilliant eyes, and a nervousness of manner extremely significant.

She also noticed at a glance that the room was in disorder; and that he had evidently been busy for hours in arranging and destroying papers.

"Your father is better?" he asked as she entered; but his lips were so dry that it was with difficulty that he formed the words on them.

"Not better, rather worse! but I could not restrain my impatience to return," was her answer.

"You have heard something then?"

"Heard something? What should I hear?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing; but the place is full of idle rumours. The air breeds accusation and surmises. It is not to be endured."

Jacintha looked at him with her stern eyes, and the glance seemed to penetrate his very soul.

"Therefore," she said, very calmly, "therefore you are going to quit it."

"How dare you—" he flashed out.

"Soily; there is no need to take the whole house into your confidence. I know nothing—dare know nothing, if you like; but I am not blind. Trifles speak as eloquently as the strongest acts. Your manner is that of a man contemplating some desperate act. You are excited and unsteady; you are destroying papers; you have on your fingers diamonds of enormous value which you have never worn before—diamonds are nice, easily portable property; you have a light portable valise with secret drawers and—I thought so—here is one with the spoils of Lady Gower's jewel box stowed away in it. Everything speaks of flight! Everything tells me that you feel your position desperate, and intend to fly from it."

The baronet dropped into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

"And if I do make preparation for the worst?" he asked.

"Why, not only will it be the act of a coward, but you forget—I also have an interest in your remaining here."

"You!" cried the baronet, with undisguised contempt.

"Yes—I," she retorted.

"And you think that I am bound to remain here to be denounced as an impostor—a felon—heaven knows what, for the sake of your promised anuity?"

"Exactly. I think so."

"And what if I differ in opinion? What if I snap my fingers at your claim, and determine on this step?"

"You put a supposititious case only. Be candid—in this your determination?"

"Yes."

Without a word Jacintha stretched forth her hand and touched a spring-bell upon the table, the reverberation of which filled the room.

"In heaven's name what does that mean?" Sir Anselm demanded.

"Simply that I am determined also. I am going to give you up to justice."

CHAPTER LVI.

THE MOTHER'S LOVE.

"Oh, my son, my son! that I should live to see thee thus bowed down by shame; Thou of whom I was so proud."

Lady of Lyons.

It will not have been forgotten that Jasper Newton was remanded on suspicion of having by foul means made away with his rival and mortal foe, Albany Seymour.

He was, as I have described, placed in charge of the village constable, who had instructions to convey him to the county gaol, where he might remain while further evidence against him was being obtained. But the latter part of his instructions Fullom, as he was called, was never destined to carry into effect.

Scarcely had he quitted Gorewood Place, in charge of Fullom, and closely followed up by the deaf witness, Ruff Wattall, and a little crowd of villagers, before, to their surprise and horror, he suddenly gave a piteous moan, and throwing up his arms, fell forward upon the ground, utterly insensible.

It was a fit of an acute and dangerous nature, the result of long mental excitement, combined with increasing bodily weakness, want of food—for the deadly poison of which he was the victim robbed him of all appetite—and all the contingencies of his desperate and irregular life.

At first it was feared that he would die. His great physical strength, reduced as it had been, was however sufficient to enable him to get over the immediate effects of the attack. After a long, long interval, in the course of which they carried him bodily to Fullom's cottage, he revived; and the life-current flowed in his veins once more. But though he breathed, and his heart beat, he was unconscious of what passed around him, or only so vaguely conscious that all on which he looked, all to which he listened, was as in a dream.

At first he had no power of speech, and when his words came thickly and huskily from his lips, they had little meaning or coherence. Once they heard him mutter with energetic distinctness, "Dead! he is dead!" and long afterwards the name of Violet came softly from his lips.

Next day he was little better, and so prostrated in body that it was deemed impossible to move him. So he remained at the cottage, which was watched night and day, as a matter of form, though there was little chance that the prisoner would attempt an escape.

Meanwhile every exertion was used to discover the extent of the wretched being's guilt.

Of Albany Seymour nothing could be heard.

The wood was searched again and again: but his body was not found. No traces of the violence that had been used towards him could be discovered. Beyond the bare fact that he had rushed into the wood after the pistol had been fired into the carriage and had not reappeared, nothing was known.

In some moment of extra sagacity on the part of Fullom, it occurred to him to seek out Violet Maldon, whose silence, under the circumstances, was certainly remarkable. Acting on this idea, he made inquiries at the inn at which she had stayed. There he learned that the lady had gone suddenly, no one knew whither, and that Tadge, her maid, after lingering some short time after her mistress, had departed also; in consequence of a letter suddenly received, it was thought: but nothing was absolutely known.

This state of things was both alarming and perplexing.

Sir Anselm Gower held a consultation with his brother magistrates upon it, and upon the general features of the case, but they only shook their heads and confessed their inability to advise. That there had been foul play appeared obvious, but who was to decide as to the nature of it?

And in the absence of farther evidence what was to be done with the prisoner?

So far as he was concerned his lips were sealed.

As day by day faint glimmerings of the returning light of mind broadened into the full glow of intelligence, as day by day he grew more and more conscious of his position, he grew sullen and taciturn. Never a question as to his crime passed his lips.

He appeared to have little curiosity as to whether the body of his victim had been discovered or not, Nor did his own fate seem to trouble him.

Lying upon his bed in a curtained room all day, and staring at the feeble lamp or sinking into fitful slumbers by night, the range of his thoughts, like the range of his life, appeared bounded by those four walls.

So the constable's wife, Kesiah, reported, and she acted as his nurse and general attendant.

Kesiah Fullom was not a woman to be at all satisfied with this state of things. She was one of those booby women with little gray eyes and thin lips, and cheeks sunken into hollows from the absence of teeth, and, like many of her class, only two strong points were observable in her. She was always working, and she was always talking. Her capacity for cleaning was miraculous; little as her cottage was, she contrived to have it in a perpetual state of "cleaning up." But even her industry was no match for her loquacity. She had a burning curiosity to pry into the bottom of everything around her: to know the affairs of her neighbours, and she was perpetually on the alert for news.

Of course, when the proud distinction was conferred on her of having a famous criminal under her roof, she was not likely to be satisfied by being left in the dark as to the points of interest about him.

Whatever the mystery connected with his crime might be, she determined to fathom it.

And in her capacity of nurse she set about this in the most adroit way.

"You're better and quieter to-day," she would remark, instinctively; "is there anything you'd like done now?"

"Nothing," he would answer.

"No letters to write? No messages to nobody?"

"No."

"They was sayin' down at the baker's as there was no news about nothing—you know—nothing as you're interested in—but law, as I says, what news should there be, and you a layin' there like a corpse?"

No answer.

"O' course, of there was news, why, who would be the most likely to hear of it, if we didn't—with John that active, and you nat'rally anxious about all as is goin' on? Why, as I says—"

But usually at some such point as this the patient would groan heavily and turn over on his side with a muttered remark that he was drowsy and thought he could sleep.

"Which," as the lady observed to her intimate friends, "it were all stuff, and enough to aggravate a smart—that it were. And he no more sleepy than I were, not half so much. Sittin' up a' nights with him and what not, and a-lasin' of all nat'r rest."

One gloomy evening the distressed Kesiah had gone through one of those small wordy scuffles in which she was always defeated, and retired to the street-door to see what public gossip or scandal might be abroad, by way of consolation.

A gorgeous sunset was dying out into purple gloom, and the objects around were growing more and more indistinct, when the lady's sharp eyes became aware of the fact that there was a stranger in the village street—one of her own sex—who was approaching in a hesitating manner, sometimes stopping at the open doors of cottages, and then stealing on again in a weary and hopeless manner.

"Now that's somebody as wants somebody, I'll be bound," was Kesiah's reflection; "and I shouldn't wonder—"

But she had not time to finish the sentence before the dusky figure in question turned in that direction, and seeing the woman at the door, began to cross the road towards her.

Kesiah's face was all in a glow in an instant.

Here was a stranger—a possible adventure—indeed, it was impossible to say what there was not within the bounds of possibility.

While the delicious sense of coming adventure burned in her heart, the stranger reached the door—hesitated, and began to turn away.

"It's someone you're in search on, ma'am?" Kesiah inquired, quite unable to restrain her curiosity any longer, especially with the prospect of its being defeated altogether.

"I am directed to a person named Fullom," the stranger answered, in a low, tearful voice.

"Which that's me, ma'am," replied the other, with an involuntary courtesy of respect.

"It was a—a constable, I believe—"

"Oh, yes, ma'am, my husband. Not in, but expected—"

The stranger tottered as if she would fall, then putting out a hand against the door-post to save herself, she said:

"You have an unfortunate man staying in your house?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am; a prisoner as should be in the

county jail by rights, but Fullom he's that soft-hearted—"

"Could I see him?" the woman gasped.

"Well, as to that," returned Kesiah, eyeing her from head to foot, "he is a prisoner, you know."

"But, surely—"

"And it would be more than Fullom's place is worth if it come to the justices' ears, let alone as Fullom's away, and if anything come of it through me a-breakin' his orders, not as I suppose as you'd smuggle him off in no way, nor nothin' o' that."

"I promise you," cried the stranger, eagerly, "that nothing shall happen which can compromise you in any possible way. Let me only see him and speak a word with him, and I will go whenever you order me to do so."

Still Kesiah hesitated.

The sense of power is so exquisite to those who seldom possess it. A little brief authority is so delicious, and the woman liked to be entreated and to have the issue depending on her word.

"It's agin the law," she began, "and I don't know—"

"For heaven's sake, don't refuse me!" the stranger pleaded with clasped hands. "I must see him!"

"Must?" cried Kesiah, with some asperity.

"No, no! I did not mean it. I will withdraw the words. I will beg your pardon, here, on my knees at your feet. Anything, only let me see him!"

As she spoke, her slight form crouched towards Kesiah as if she were indeed about to fall at her feet.

In this attitude she ventured to whisper one word in her ear.

The woman heard it and her manner instantly changed.

Tears came into her eyes, and she seized the thin, tremulous hand extended towards her.

"Come in. You shall see him," she said.

The wreck of the manly Jasper Newton lay on the bed in the gloom, tossing and turning wearily. As the door opened he glanced towards it, and instinctively perceived rather than saw that a slight form hastened towards him.

"Oh, Jasper! oh, my boy!" was sobbed out in the darkness.

"Mother! you here," the unhappy son exclaimed, in a tone of anguish.

And he would have drawn himself away; but her arms were about his neck, her kisses were warming upon his pale cheeks.

"My boy! my poor, suffering boy!" she ejaculated. "Heaven be praised! I have found you, oh, yes, yes, yes, I have found you."

Amidst her tears and her caresses, it was barely possible for the object of them to utter a word.

When he did speak it was in a tone that went like a dagger to her loving heart.

"You forget, mother," he said, "who it is you are taking back to your heart. Not the son of your love. Not the boy who was the pride and joy of your life. No, no! It is the ingrate, who yielding up his soul to a fatal passion, forgot even the sacredness of a mother's love. Leave me, I am not worthy your affection. I can bring nothing but shame and misery upon you. Go, then! Go! Forget that I live and that you ever loved me."

He would have drawn the blanket which covered him over his head, and turned to the wall; but his mother's arms were about him, and he was helpless in her fond and passionate embrace. What energy there was—what a depth of passionate endearment—in that little dove-like woman in this hour of trial!

"Jasper!" she exclaimed, "you must not drive me from you. I will not trouble or reproach you—not in words, not by a look; I will be humble and quiet and submissive, but I must be with you. You are my son, and I dare not despise you or think evil of you. They are saying terrible things of you—of my Jasper!—but what is it to me? You are my son, and I know no more—I will remember nothing more. Only they must not drive me from you."

"Heaven help me! I have prayed to be spared this hour!" exclaimed the prisoner. "Oh, if I could have been spared this!"

(To be continued.)

ALTHOUGH in England only about 3,000 cripples are born as such in the year, so many infants become so, through neglect and penury, that it is estimated that the floating population of cripples in England is 100,000, of whom 39,000 at least are girls.

M. LEJEAN brings home numerous photographs from the East. He has recently visited Amritsain, a city of 1,800,000 inhabitants, the centre of the manufacture of Cashmere shawls. This enterprising traveller describes the city as possessing monuments and buildings of marvellous beauty. One temple he visited has a dome and turrets of gold, with thousands of jewels set in the metal.

RISE IN THE PRICE OF PRECIOUS STONES.—A great rise has taken place in the price of precious stones during the last twenty years. Sorts selling formerly at £3 to £4 per carat now fetch £10 to £12; amethysts that were 50s. an ounce are now worth £8, and the consumption of diamonds in Birmingham alone has increased tenfold. Pearls, especially the smaller sorts, are used largely, while the pearl oyster-shell or mother-of-pearl, is worked up extensively by the button-makers. A few years ago a small parcel of shells was brought to Birmingham, which by mistake had not been cleaned of the pearls at the fishery; one of the pearls thus found sold for £10, and was resold for £160, and afterwards held for sale in Paris for £800.

OLIVER DARVEL.

CHAPTER XI.

ERMINIA remained a few moments where Herman had left her; then, as if recalling the necessity of speedy action in her affairs, she returned to the room in the hotel in which her son was sleeping, and wrote a long letter to her brother, detailing the history of the last eleven years of her life, which had hitherto been partially veiled from his knowledge.

Franz Rosen had settled in Munich, and married there; he heard vague rumours of the admiration of the Prince of Berchtold for his sister, but the extent of her infatuation he was far from suspecting. The time had now arrived, however, in which further concealment was impossible, and Erminia laid bare the whole story of her wrongs, entreating her brother to receive her son as his own, and train him to be as good a man as their father had been.

Thus passed the greater part of the night, and towards dawn she lay down beside her child, and fell into the sleep of utter physical and mental exhaustion.

When Herman again sought the presence of Prince Ernest he found him in full toilet, awaiting the announcement of his carriage, to pay a visit to one of the fair ladies who courted his society.

In spite of the disfiguring mark upon his cheek, it was impossible to deny that Berchtold was singularly elegant and attractive in appearance, when good humour and geniality shone upon his well-formed features.

At such times it was easy to understand the kind of fascination he exercised over women, and Herman could forgive Erminia Rosen for the glamour he had thrown over her at the inexperienced age of seventeen.

It was true that Prince Ernest had stolen from him the only woman he had ever loved, but he had in some measure atoned for that wrong by showing all his hollow and base nature to that trusting creature, till she recoiled from him as much as she had once loved him, and turned again to the faithful heart that had never deceived her in word or deed.

The prince fixed his light eyes, now bright with animation, upon his steward, and said:

"Have you satisfied your last doubt by this time, you most cautious of men? Have you caged the right bird?"

"I have, my lord, and here is the proof that my doubts were not quite superfluous."

An expression of ferocious joy lighted up the features of the listener, and the blue mark deepened its hue as it always did in moments of excitement. He clutched the letters Herman placed before him, then pointed to a chair as a permission to Herman to be seated, and throwing himself on another, eagerly began the examination of the letters. While he was thus occupied, his companion keenly watched the expression of his features, and he was not surprised at the chagrined look that gradually crept over them as he read.

The manuscript in cipher was then impatiently tossed over, and he at length looked up with a dark frown on his face.

"If you have no key to this, I am little wiser than I was before. The letters only prove what I knew before—that the child has been removed to England."

"I do not possess the clue to the cipher. I thought it possible you might have it, as you were so anxious to secure the papers of Ledru."

"Not so much the papers as the man himself. He can tell all I wish to know, and, by heaven! he shall do so this time. Where is he? and how did you gain possession of these?"

Herman gave a concise statement of all that had occurred between Hans and Darvel, and ended by explaining that the latter was now fast asleep under the influence of a powerful narcotic.

"So far so good. You have done well, Herman, and I do not hesitate to give you praise when it is merited."

"Whither do you wish him taken, my lord?"

"To my strong castle in the Berchwood Dell,

There we can deal with him without having to answer to any man for his fate. The place is so lonely, and my jurisdiction so unquestioned, that there can be no interference in his favour."

"You will not proceed to extremities, I trust, my lord," and there was a slight huskiness in the voice of the speaker.

To this the prince replied:

"That will depend entirely on himself. If he still defies me—if he refuses to reveal the secret I have hitherto so unavailingly demanded—he must take the legitimate consequences of his obstinacy. I am lord of the manor of Berchtols, and he shall be made to feel my power."

The steward made no reply for a few moments. He then gravely asked:

"Am I, then, to make immediate arrangements for Ledru's removal, my lord?"

"Precisely. In the morning I shall set out for the castle, which is a weary journey from this place, heaven knows, but I must take it, I suppose. There I shall sit in judgment on this man, settle his fate, and return to Vienna in time to give my hand to the richly dowered heiress of Guilderstora. And, by the way, that reminds me of another little business transaction it is necessary to arrange. Here is a memorandum of a sum of money to be paid over to Madame Rosen within the next four weeks, and you must also provide the necessary funds to enable me to make a grand appearance on the occasion of my marriage. You understand all you have to do?"

"Perfectly, my lord. I shall neglect nothing, you may feel assured."

"So much the better. You are a jewel of a steward, Herman, and I appreciate your services at their just value. A week from to-day I shall expect to see you at Berch Castle with your prisoner."

With this, the prince put on his furred pelisse and hat, rang for his carriage, and, in a few moments, was on his way to the *petit souper* for which he was engaged, leaving Herman to secure the letters and place them in his portfolio.

Again he carefully examined them, and then removed from them a leaf written in the mysterious cipher, and enclosed it with the following lines, which he dashed off at the prince's writing-table:

"HONOURED MISTRESS.—The enclosed will vouch to you for the fact that your agent has again been seized, and is in the power of your foe. He will be conveyed to the lonely castle in the Dell, where its master will sit in judgment upon him. But I shall also be there, and you know that I am always, honoured madame, yours to command. WILHELM HERMAN."

This letter was sealed and put in his pocket, to be sent to an agent of his own, who would place it in the hands for which it was designed. Herman then delayed a few moments to lock up the precious papers in his master's desk.

Unlimited confidence was placed in him, and in his business capacity he was fully entitled to it, for he was strictly honourable in his pecuniary transactions with his employer, though he did not consider himself bound to aid and abet him in his schemes of villainy.

Herman owed something to the prince for his base conduct towards Erminia Rosen, and he meant to pay this debt by defeating his plans and circumventing his will as far as he could safely do so. He intended to retain his present position so long as he could serve the interests of the Duchess of Lindorf and her daughter, and it was the strongest wish of his heart to bring about a union between the young heiress of Lichtenstern and the discarded son of the Prince of Berchtols.

How this was to be brought about he could not yet see, but that he should find the means of accomplishing what lay so near to his heart he would not permit himself to doubt.

Having arranged his master's portfolio to his satisfaction, the steward let himself out through the private entrance, and again sought the inn where Hans was watching over his sleeping prisoner.

After a brief interview with this man, the two parted, with a mutual understanding as to what was next to be done to remove Oliver from Hamburg, without allowing him an opportunity to appeal to the authorities for protection. On the following morning Haas assumed a new phase of character, and he disguised himself so effectually that Oliver never once suspected his identity when he appeared before him.

Oliver awoke feeling confused and wretched; his brain still whirled, and his head ached intolerably. He slowly recalled the incidents of the previous evening, and in much alarm he proceeded to search for his pocket-book. His money was safe, but the journal and letters had disappeared, and in the confused state of his intellect he concluded he must have lost them at the beer-house, or near it.

On drawing up the blind, he found that the sun was setting, and he must have slept nearly

twenty-four hours. He felt faint and sick from want of food, and he descended to the eating-room, where he found the disguised Hans awaiting his appearance.

Unable to swallow more than a few morsels, Oliver arose and went out, closely followed by the spy. When they gained the street, Hans at once addressed him, and offered his services as a cicerone. Oliver turned quickly towards him, and said:

"I scarcely need a guide this evening, but if you can help me to find the one who went with me yesterday afternoon I will reward you handsomely. He has robbed me of some important papers which I am anxious to recover."

"Robbed you, myneher! Then why don't you make your complaint in the proper quarter? If you do so, the villain will be arrested, punished, and you will get back your important documents."

"I should prefer not doing that, as they are strictly of a private character, and—well, it's no business of yours, but if you can bring me face to face with him I will make it well worth your while."

"Ah! ah! secret papers, myneher? That looks suspicious, but Hamburg is a free city—a free city, and we don't meddle with other people's businesses here. If you will play me fairly, I will deal so with you yesterday."

"I may have lost them in the beer-house, for I was there with him, and I am afraid that I was stupefied with the liquor I drank."

"Very likely, myneher, as that commonly happens to those persons who go to that strong tap for the first time. But we had better go at once and inquire concerning them of the people there."

As his brain began gradually to clear, Oliver felt certain that the pocket-book had not been lost, but stolen, for the roll of notes had evidently been removed from it and carefully placed in an inside pocket of his coat; but as he knew nothing better to do in the strait in which he was placed, he walked towards the beer-house, scarcely conscious of the valuable account given him by his guide of the different places they passed.

On entering, they found the public room empty, but in reply to the inquiry made for Hans Sach, the lairdiord replied that he had been there looking for Oliver, as he had something belonging to him which he wished to restore.

"Sit down, sir," he said, in bad French, "Hans will be here in a moment."

Though much bewildered by this cool admission that his property had been appropriated, and after probably being found worthless, was about to be restored by the person who had purloined it, Oliver had no alternative but to obey.

On looking around he saw that his guide had disappeared, but after the lapse of a few moments, the veritable Hans, in his worn suit of gray and slouched hat, appeared.

He was calmly smoking his pipe, and after closing the door behind him, he good-naturedly said:

"Good evening, myneher. They told me that you wished to speak with me again."

Amazed at his coolness, Oliver angrily asked:

"Did you not also hear that I have sought you to demand the restoration of the papers you robbed me of last evening, after drugging the liquor I drank at your suggestion?"

Hans deliberately removed the pipe and composedly said:

"I took the papers, yah! but they were important to a much greater man than you. How you came by them, or whether they belonged to you, is no concern of mine. I was paid to get them from you. I flatter myself that I did it cleverly enough, eh—what do you think, myneher?"

"Think! I think you are the coolest villain I ever happened to meet," exclaimed Oliver, in angry perturbation. "If you do not restore my property at once I will have you arrested."

"Yah—yah! we are a just people, but some folks are in such a ticklish position themselves that they dare not ask for it; eh, myneher?"

Hans fixed his piercing glance upon his companion to mark the effect produced by his words. The sudden change in Oliver's expression assured him that he was not far wide of the mark, and he leaned back on his seat and silently chuckled as he surveyed the unversed and helpless-looking man before him.

But for the false position in which he was placed Oliver would have carried out his threat, but situated as he was, he knew that he had no power to appeal to any authority that could or would protect him. He must bear the burden. Eugene Ledru had thrown off with his life, or he must answer in his own person for the murder of his friend and the possession of his property.

Hans was quick to detect his discomfiture, and he presently tapped the breast of his coat, and went on:

"What would you say now, my young friend, if I told you that your pocket-book is safe here, and I defy you to gain possession of it? Yah, I mean to keep it for him that has the best right to it."

After a moment of hesitation, Oliver said:

"You were paid to take it from me—you can, perhaps, be bribed to restore it. I have money—a considerable sum, and I will give you half I possess to regain those papers."

The man's small eyes twinkled knowingly, and he shook his head, as he sagely replied:

"Money is good—very good; but sometimes it is got too hardly. If I took yours, that is the way it would be with me; so you see I dare not accept your very liberal offer. I know the man I have to deal with, and I know better than to take a bribe from you; it would ruin me—ruin me."

While he was deliberately uttering these words Oliver was taking the measure of his burly frame, and he thought his light and active form would be more than a match for such an antagonist.

With a sudden bound he sprang towards the Dutchman, and attempted to grasp his throat; but Hans was on his guard, and he evaded Oliver's clutch, at the same time uttering a shrill whistle, which was responded to by the sudden opening of the door at Oliver's back; a thick mantle was thrown over his head, which not only impeded his motions, but nearly stifled his breathing.

Vain were Oliver's most desperate efforts to extricate himself; he found his arms pinioned by the strong grasp of a much stouter man than himself, and by a dexterous motion he was suddenly tripped up and his feet caught in the strong clasp of another pair of sinewy hands.

Thus ignominiously carried like a bale of goods, Oliver was taken across the garden to a gate, where a close carriage was waiting.

Into this the prisoner was thrust, with one of his captors beside him, who sternly whispered:

"I am armed with a poisoned dagger, a scratch from which will produce death in a few moments. Utter one cry, or make an attempt to escape, and I have my orders to use it. Sit still and obey my commands during the journey that lies before us, and you will be safe from harm."

Oliver managed to release his head from the stifling folds of cloth sufficiently to ask:

"Who, then, are you? and why am I a second time seized in this clandestine manner, and borne off against my own consent?"

"When we arrive at the end of our journey you will get an answer to your question—let that suffice."

While they thus spoke the carriage was proceeding at a rapid pace, and they soon passed beyond the limits of the city.

Everything seemed to have been arranged beforehand, for no detention took place, and the hapless Oliver found himself borne away, he knew not whither, nor what fate might await him at the end of his journey.

Unable to obtain any farther satisfaction from the man who seemed to act as chief of the party, Oliver endeavoured to resign himself to the fate he could not evade.

He hoped, when he reached the end of his journey, that some light to guide him would be thrown on the mystery into which he had been plunged; and he indulged the hope that his captors would scarcely dare to proceed to extremities with him when assured that he was not the person they had sought, and had no power to reveal the secret which had been but too faithfully preserved by Ledru.

On the evening of the fifth day after leaving Hamberg, the travellers entered a wild, romantic glen, girdled by a dark fringe of trees, above which arose vast picturesque heights of granite.

Scattered among the mountain pines were lakes of sparkling crystal, which reflected the light of the declining sun, and under other circumstances Oliver would have been charmed with the beauty of the scenery.

A bird's-eye view of the valley was obtained before the carriage plunged into the narrow defile, bounded on either side by lofty walls of granite, which formed the entrance to Berchtols. Oliver saw a few scattered houses on the hillsides, but these were soon lost to view in the sombre pass which wound downwards for two miles before gaining the open country below.

In the centre of this lonely valley arose a conical rock overlooking the stream, and on this stood an extensive castellated building, whose moss-grown walls seemed almost coeval with the gigantic foundation on which they were built.

The massive structure, with its portcullis and drawbridge, its narrow loopholes of windows, stood grim and gloomy enough in the waning light of day, and Oliver's heart sank within him when he was told that he had reached the end of his journey, and the castle of Berchtols was before him.

When they alighted from the carriage the lips of Hugel unclosed to say:

"You are at your journey's end, monsieur, and you will soon know why you have been brought hither."

When they reached the door of the castle a grave, respectable-looking man stood ready to receive Oliver from his guard.

After a glance at him, he spoke to the German in his own language, which by this time the prisoner could partially understand:

"You have used much diligence, Hugel, and the prince will be pleased at the expedition you have made. You have reached this place almost as soon as he did himself."

The baron nodded, and motioning to Oliver to follow him into the dreary-looking mansion, started gravely forward.

CHAPTER XII.

THE baron moved silently forward, followed by Oliver Darvel, whose heart sank when he looked on the massive walls that enclosed him, and reflected on the inaccessible and gloomy spot in which they stood.

Without assistance, he felt assured that he should never be able to effect his escape from this dreary prison-house, in which he might be detained for years, in the vain hope that a secret he did not possess might be extorted from him.

He passed through a long hall decorated with trophies of the chase, and followed his silent conductor into a narrow passage that opened from its farthest extremity.

Suddenly a cloak was again thrown over his head, and he was lifted from his feet as easily as if he had been an infant, and borne swiftly forward.

A door unclosed, and the man who held him in his strong grasp began to descend a flight of steps.

Down, down they went, till Oliver Darvel supposed they must have reached the deepest subterranean passage beneath the castle; a second door grated on its rusty hinges, and the half-suffocated prisoner was roughly cast into the sombre dungeon they had reached, and a harsh voice spoke before closing the ponderous door upon the unhappy prisoner.

"Eugène Ledru, you will be left here to reflect on your position, and make up your mind as to whether you will save your own life by revealing what will be demanded of you, or accept the doom that will surely be awarded, if you still prove contumacious."

These words were spoken in French, the door clanged to, the bolts were shot, and the retreating steps of the two men were audible as they descended the steps cut in the solid rock on which the castle was built.

As his vision became accustomed to the gloom of the place, Oliver discovered a faint thread of light, which penetrated through a crevice near the roof of the dungeon, and with its assistance he made out the dimensions of his cell to be about ten feet square, its height scarcely that, and he concluded that it had been hewn from the bed of the granite cliff which arose abruptly from the bed of the stream the castle overlooked. The only thing the place contained was a pile of straw, on which the shivering prisoner threw himself, wrapped in the cloak which had been thrown over him.

A sudden fit of passion came over him, and Oliver started up and shouted for help, till his voice died away in the feeble quivering of utter exhaustion; then he lay panting and struggling with the horrible fears that assailed him.

What was this mystery, and how was it to end? What could he do to extricate himself from the wretched position into which his own folly had plunged him?

The hours dragged heavily away. Oliver was faint with hunger, and parched with thirst, yet no one seemed to remember his wants or seek to relieve them. At moments he believed that he was brought there to perish in the darkness, but then he remembered the secret he was supposed to possess, and he felt the consoling assurance that, let his ultimate fate be what it might, he would again be brought to the light of day, again behold men's faces, though they might be cruel ones, and hear the tones of human voices, even if they only spoke to pronounce his condemnation to a wretched and lingering fate.

Oliver's long-contained journey had greatly fatigued him, and in spite of his mental and bodily sufferings, he at length slept heavily. But from this temporary release he only awoke to new tortures, when fully aroused to all the horrors of his position.

Poor Oliver was not brave; he was a sensitive, refined, and affectionate man, but he was not formed to suffer in a cause in which he possessed no interest. Had he been aware of the ultimate views of Prince Ernest with regard to the heiress of Lichtenfels, he would have refused to reveal the place of her concealment, but as her asylum was unknown to him, he would not have that trial. His own was

a far more severe one—to suffer in a cause he did not understand, and be punished for refusing to reveal what was unknown to himself.

The lonely hours dragged away with no interruption till another evening came, and that interval seemed an age to the starved and half-frozen prisoner. He listened for approaching steps with ears sharpened by acute suffering, but they were so long delayed that when two messengers at length entered his cell, they found him lying on a heap of straw in a half-insensible condition.

One of them drew a flask of wine from his pocket, which he offered to Oliver to drink, at the same time remarking in German to his companion:

"It was well that Herman thought of sending this, but if the prince knew that he had been allowed to taste a drop of anything, he would be furious."

The wine was thin and weak enough, but it revived the flagging senses of Oliver, and gave him resolution and strength to obey the command of the men to follow them up the long flight of winding-stairs which led to the upper part of the castle.

To his surprise, they moved towards the entrance, and stepped into the courtyard, into which the fading sunset was falling. A brilliant figure in Hungarian hunting-costume stood just within the gateway, where he had dismounted from his horse, a magnificent bay, with dainty limbs and well-formed head.

The falcon glance of the huntsman fell superciliously upon the group, and he made a faint motion towards the eastern wing of the castle, where the servants' offices were situated. Oliver's companions moved in that direction, and after crossing a narrow passage, they entered an inferior courtyard, on which the various offices necessary to so large an establishment opened. Oliver observed that they were all built in that heavy, massive style which seemed intended to last as long as the rock on which the structure was founded.

On the last quadrangle they traversed, the windows of a large kitchen opened, and the savoury fumes of delicious viands in the process of preparation were wafted to the half-famished prisoner.

He hoped they were about to place before him the food he so keenly craved, but he was soon made to understand that he was only brought there to be tantalized with the appetizing odour of food, that it might increase the gnawing pangs of hunger that preyed upon his vitals.

As Oliver was hurried forward, he gasped:

"I am famishing, gentlemen. Pray grant me a morsel of bread, if nothing more, to give me strength for what I may have to go through."

"I dare say, but it would me as much as our places are worth to give you a crumb."

After rapidly uttering these words, the man hurried him on through a back entrance into a long, narrow corridor, from which rooms opened on either hand.

A door covered with tapestry admitted them into a picture gallery, the walls of which were covered with family portraits, some of which must have been painted in the earliest ages of the art.

Oliver was hurried through this into an apartment that opened from it, fitted up half as a library, half as a drawing-room, and it was evident that a luxurious taste had presided over its arrangements.

But the prisoner had little time to notice these details, for his attention was instantly absorbed by the two occupants of the apartment.

Seated near a table in the centre of the room was the tall cavalier Oliver had seen in the yard, and the man who had received him on his arrival on the previous evening.

The cap of the huntsman had been removed, and his long fair hair floated in wavy curls upon the heavily embroidered collar of his coat, but it imparted no softness to that stern, pitiless face, on which the blue mark glowed in its deepest intensity, while his beryl-tinted eyes gleamed beneath the brows which were drawn together in an ominous frown.

His companion was seated in a large cushioned chair, which his large, bulky form completely filled. He had a fair German face, and to the superficial observer good-natured enough, but to one who looked beneath the surface there was a world of sinister cruelty in the cold eyes and sneering lips of Baron Ardheim.

He wore a richly furred dressing-gown, and a jockey cap of black velvet, beneath which his gray hair fell in heavy flakes over his clubby face.

The lips of Prince Ernest unclosed, but the baron deprecatingly waved his hand and said:

"Let me question the prisoner, nephew. You are too impetuous—too impetuous. Gentleness can gain more than threats."

"Do so if you desire it; I am quite willing to gain my ends by any fair means, uncle, so if you can make him speak, it will be well."

The last words were spoken with a vindictive earnestness that left no room to doubt their sincerity.

"Very well; if I fail, then you will feel free to use your power as you may think best for your own interests. Come forward, monsieur. Hugel, place a seat for the prisoner."

Scarcely able to stand, Oliver gladly availed himself of the permission to be seated.

With an expression of bland persuasion, the baron turned his small black eyes upon him, and asked, in excellent English:

"How do you find yourself after the fatigue of your long journey, monsieur Ledru?"

"Not very well, as you may imagine," replied Oliver, indignantly. "I demand of you, sir, why I, an inoffensive stranger, the native of another country, have been waylaid, robbed of my property, and brought to this out-of-the-way place to be starved?"

With immovable politeness the baron replied:

"I trust that you will excuse the apparently discourteous measures which have been taken to secure your presence in this ancient castle, which, by the way, is well worthy of a visit as a relic of the past. You are indignant at the want of hospitality shewn you since your arrival beneath its time-honoured roof, but the truth is, monsieur, this house was not built for a prison, but for a palace, and for lack of a dungeon, we have been compelled to place you in a disused wine-cellar for safe keeping."

His fat sides quivered as if with suppressed laughter while he uttered these mocking words. Oliver saw this, and his anger increased; he said, with sarcastic bitterness:

"Indeed! I shall be glad to be informed for what reason a human being should be treated as I have been since my arrival here."

"Your request is reasonable, and it is my intention to give you the information you so busily demand. My nephew has a pocket-book which was found in your possession; its contents deeply concern us, and we find that the most important part of the correspondence which it contains is written in cipher, to which you must possess the key; it, of course, became necessary to obtain the cipher from yourself. I hope you now fully understand, M. Ledru, that the pleasure of your company was indispensable to us, or we should never have interfered with your freedom of action so far as to force you to come hither against your will."

"I understand nothing. I am in a maze to which I possess no clue myself, yet if I state the simple truth to you, you will probably refuse to believe me. The name by which you address me is not my own. In a moment of desitation and madness I assumed that of Eugène Ledru, but I swear to you that I am not that unfortunate man. He committed suicide, and I—"

The prince here broke impetuously in:

"You were found in possession of Ledru's effects; every step you have taken for weeks has been traced by a man as keen-sighted as a hound; and there is little chance that he could have mistaken his quarry. That dodge won't save you, M. Ledru; it is only one more added to those, I am informed, you have before practised. Furnish the key to these papers, which doubtless reveal all I wish to know, and you shall be restored to freedom."

Oliver earnestly replied:

"I know no more about the contents of that pocket-book than you do. I wish to heaven I did, for I should consider the information you seek little enough to purchase my liberty. I am ready to swear before heaven that I am not Ledru, and that no secret that concerns you is in my possession."

His words seemed to produce not the slightest effect upon his auditors. The baron here spoke in his unctuous tones:

"My dear fellow, you are exhausted; your memory fails you from lack of nourishment. Ernest, order supper, and when M. Ledru has refreshed himself, he will have strength to reveal to us what we so much desire to know."

With a sinister smile the prince rang the bell, and gave the order to the servant who answered it.

Oliver could not restrain the eager interest with which he watched the man, when he returned with a waiter covered with a snowy napkin. Several dishes of delicate porcelain, filled with most tempting viands, were placed on a table near him, and he gratefully said:

"Thank you for considering my wants, gentlemen, for I am half famished. I may be able to speak more to the purpose when I have satisfied my hunger."

"Ah! ha! my young friend; but there is one important question that must be answered before you can be permitted to eat bread in this house. Where is the child?"

"Yes—where is the child?" repeated Prince Ernest, in a hard and resolute tone. "Answer that question, and the key to the cipher is comparatively unimportant."

Oliver passionately replied:

"I do not know what you mean. What child—and what am I expected to reveal concerning it?"

"The little girl referred to in these letters, under the *sobriquet* of the Antelope, is the child we speak of, as you well know. Where is she, for it is necessary to find and bring her back to her grandfather before he dies?"

"I never heard of her before. If you were to question me for a year I could not tell you who or what the Antelope is, or where she is to be found. I swear to you that I am not Ledru, and if you will listen I will explain how I came to be mistaken for him."

"Pooh! why will you still re-echo that falsehood?" said the prince, contemptuously. "You have denied your own identity several times, M. Ledru, but with me no such ruse will avail. You have hitherto had to deal only with my emissaries, but now you are face to face with the Blue Tiger himself, and if you will take a good look at me, you will see that the name was not given without good cause."

Oliver shuddered as his eyes fell on the cold, immovable face before him, in which no mercy was to be found, handsome as he was—captivating as he could render it to those he wished to charm. He despairingly repeated:

"I am not Ledru. I unfortunately accepted the legacy he left me, and preserved those accursed papers, which brought me into such unimaginable trouble."

Prince Ernest recalled the suspicions of his steward that some mistake had been made in securing the right person, and he suddenly asked:

"If you are not Eugène Ledru, who, then, are you?"

"I am the most unfortunate of men, and, I verily believe, one among the weakest," said the unhappy prisoner, with bitterness; "but for the mad act which rendered me a persecuted outcast, I should now be rich and happy. Ledru destroyed himself! He bequeathed me his money, and to obtain it without question, and also to avenge myself on the relatives who had treated me badly, I assumed the name and character of the suicide, and allowed the impression to go forth that I was the person found killed in Ledru's room."

The lip of the listener curled.

"A very likely story, truly. Do not attempt so shallow an imposition on me, sir, for I shall give no credence to it. You are either the veritable Ledru, or you have yourself murdered him to gain possession of his effects. You must, at any rate, have possessed his confidence so far as to have his charge transferred to you, and I again ask you *where is the child?*"

Goaded beyond endurance, Oliver replied:

"I neither know nor care. I never heard of the child till she was spoken of here, and I do not yet understand German sufficiently to master the contents of the papers stolen from me by your orders."

The sardonic curl on the lip of Prince Ernest spoke volumes. With a sneer, he replied:

"My conscience is not so tender as to prick me on that score. Understand that the asylum of the child shall be revealed, even if I am forced to resort to torture to wring it from you."

At this threat a cold dew burst forth on the forehead of poor Oliver, and every nerve of his sensitively organized frame seemed to quiver in anticipation of the ordeal, but he looked into the marble face that confronted him, and with assumed calmness, said:

"Heaven alone can help me in this strait. I cannot reveal what is unknown to me; all the tortures that have ever been invented cannot wring from me a secret that is not in my keeping."

An incredulous smile curled the lip of the prince. He waved his hand to Hugel, and said:

"Remove the waiter. Since the prisoner refuses to answer my questions he can be in no need of food. I am sorry he has no appetite, but I think we shall be able to supply a tonic that will, in time, bring him round."

To the frightful sarcasm of these words Oliver replied:

"I cannot answer them. I do not know where the child is to be found. I never knew; if I did, I would tell you."

"It is quite useless to repeat that asseveration," replied the prince, coolly taking up a book. "Good evening, M. Ledru. Perhaps by to-morrow morning your brain will be clearer, and your memory improved."

In spite of Oliver's remonstrances and struggles, he was forced from the apartment, and again he was made to traverse the picture gallery.

But in place of retracing their steps towards the dungeon, they crossed another suite of apartments elegantly fitted up, and drew near a small octagon room situated in the western tower.

Finding resistance useless, Oliver soon ceased to struggle, and his huge companion released his hold

upon him, while he selected the key to the lock from a large bunch he held in his hand.

Oliver was looking eagerly around in the hope that he might discover some means of escape, when a panel in the wall near him was suddenly opened, and a lady in black, with a veil of crepe over her head, leaned forward, and in a rapid whisper, said:

"You have acted nobly; I heard all. Only stick to the story you have told; remain proof against every temptation, and heaven will reward your faithfulness."

The panel closed as suddenly as it had opened, and Oliver stood bewildered at the implied confidence in his devotion to a cause of which he was profoundly ignorant.

Who could this lady be?

The mother, probably, of the child whose asylum was to be concealed at all hazards to himself. But why could not she protect her own daughter, and why should the Blue Tiger so strenuously desire to gain possession of the child?

Should he never be able to penetrate the mystery, which only deepened with every hour, yet to which he was supposed to hold the clue?

The voice of Hugel broke the spell that held him motionless—almost breathless.

"This is your room, monsieur. You will find it more comfortable than the wine-cellars, and I am only sorry that your appetite did not crave the tempting food the cook had prepared expressly for you."

"Do you intend to starve me, then? Am I to have nothing to eat after fasting more than twenty-four hours?" asked Oliver, in despair.

"Oh, no, monsieur; your life is far too important to be risked in that way. There is a pittance that will sustain life," and he pointed to a very small piece of bread and a pitcher of water which were placed on a table in the corner.

The next instant the door was closed and locked from without, and Oliver seized the food and devoured it as eagerly as if it had been the most delicate of morsels.

He then examined the room, saw that it was clean, though plainly furnished, and completely worn out with all he had lately gone through, he threw himself on the bed, and soon sank into a deep and dreamless sleep.

(To be continued.)

FACE T.I.E.

An observant writer vouches for the fact of hearing the following near St. James's Palace a day or two ago. A doctor's "boy in buttons" was carrying his basket of bottles, when a passing urchin called out, "Hi, doctor! got them medicines?" The page, wishing to say something, grumbled, "Ye-es." "Then look sharp, young 'un, as the patient's a-getting well!"

A COMICAL quarrel took place the other day on a boulevard. A gentleman roughly accosted a working man, and accused him of swindling. "You sold me," he said, "a pomade to make my hair grow; see, my head is as smooth as a piece of leather." "Sir," answered the vendor of ointment, "you wrong me. There are lands where the best seeds won't grow. It is not the fault of the seed; it is the soil." The gentleman did not continue the discussion.

MURDER OR SUICIDE.—A crowd of people was recently seen collected together on one of the quays, eagerly scanning a garret window of one of the houses. Whispers and murmurs grew louder, and the crowd increased rapidly. At the window were observed the legs of a woman dangling and swaying to and fro, and it was clear that a crime had been committed or a suicide had taken place in the room. The guard was sent for, and they took observations, coming to the conclusion of the crowd. So they proceeded to the room, and as no response was given from within, forced open the door, finding themselves in the room of a young sculptor, and that the legs dangling at the window were beautiful plaster-of-paris legs of a female hung up to dry. The mare's-nest in every sense caused considerable hilarity below, and at the expense, of course, of the sergents-de-ville.

THE RESULT OF DIFFIDENCE.—The following is Mr. Diffident's speech at a presentation supper:—"Ladies and gentlemen—I beg pardon. (Laughter.) Mr. Chairman, ladies—ladies and gentlemen. (Cheers.) In returning—in rising to return, ladies and gentlemen—in returning my sincere thanks for the great and distinguished, though merited—(laughter)—unmerited—(cheers)—honour you have—I have just—just conferred—(laughter and cheers)—permit me to say—that I—I beg to assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that nothing I can say on the present occasion can sufficiently express my—your sense of my kindness—(loud applause and laughter)—will kindle a

most—I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, this is—this is the happiest moment of my life (renewed applause), and in—in returning—returning from the bottom of my heart—(cheers)—it is perhaps unnecessary—unnecessary to say any thing—(cries of "Go on")—and I trust I have said nothing—(laughter)—nothing on the present occasion that—but I'll not detain you—ladies and gentlemen—("Yes, yes, go on")—and by saying that—have said more than I intended to say on the present occasion—(Hear, hear)—I can only say that—in returning my sincere thanks, I—I beg most sincerely to thank you." (The speaker, on resuming his seat, was rewarded by several rounds of applause.)

MR. BRIGIT'S HOUSE OF COMMONS.—We have been at considerable pains to ascertain the status of Mr. Brigit's 658 persons passing under Temple Bar. The following is the result, the calculation being made for a weekday noon in term time:—Lawyers' clerks, 159; law writers, 7; clerks engaged in packing pills and ointment at Professor Holloway's, 11; certificated attorneys, 46; attorneys struck off the rolls and turned tonters, 12; ticket-of-leave men, washed and dressed by the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, 6; running clerks to bankers, 24; barristers with briefs, 18; ditto without, 50; people of no known occupation, 82; newspaper writers, 17; pickpockets, 9; barber residing in the bar itself, and going in and out for beer, 1; country clergymen going to see St. Paul's, 5; waiters, 15; actors, 4; commercial clerks, 154; tradesmen, 20; fraudulent bankrupts, 9; promoters of public companies, 14. Total, 658.—*Yorkshire Post.*

SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF.

Broom. "Ah, you dunno wot I've got!"

Basket. "No! Wot is it?"

Broom. "The toothache."—*Punch.*

FROM THE INDIA OFFICE.—A celebrated city in India is about to be renamed in honour of the new Secretary of State. It is to be called in future Granbourne Alley-habab.—*Punch.*

A CAPITAL SUGGESTION.—It is reported that an energetic effort will be made by the leaders of the fashions in Paris next season to revive the practice of powdering the hair. It is to be regretted the leaders of fashion do not pay as much attention to the insides of their heads as they do to the outsides.—*Punch.*

DONK ON PORPOISE.—"One of the sure signs," says a contemporary, "of the decrease of fish in large bodies of water is when the latter are forsaken by porpoises. The exact opposite holds good in the case of bodies, large or small, on land, for their existence becomes more fishy as it grows more porpoise-less."—*Punch.*

SHE 'AVE BEEN AND DONE IT!—The wife of our bosom, having lately paid a visit to the cornfields to witness the melancholy state of the harvest, declares that to see the wheat standing in shocks is quite shocking. We shall be glad if any of our legal subscribers will inform us whether we cannot apply to the divorce court for protection against any similar assaults on our domestic peace.—*Punch.*

DOMESTIC ECONOMY.

Wife. "Charles, dear, don't you like my new cape?"

Rev. Charles (Perpetual Curate). "Yes. Where did you manage to get it?"

Wife (delighted). "Why, I cut up your presentation gown!"—*Punch.*

A COOL IDEA.—Experiments have recently been made with "chilled projectiles," which have proved them to be prodigiously destructive. Of old, when it happened that an enemy hove in sight, the order to the gunners was to "give it to him hot." In future, "take it coolly" will perhaps be the command; and we shall not hear so much about the heat of an engagement, when the victory is won by chilled projectiles and cold steel.—*Punch.*

THE NUTTING SEASON.

"What! another reform meeting in the park, and shying stones at the aristocracy again!" It struck Mr. Tusslewig (in several places) as alarmingly like it, at first; he was sitting under a tree, quietly reading his *Standard*; but it was only the little boys trying to knock down the cheetahs!

[On the right you may perceive the vigilant park-keeper a smoking a cigar!]—*Punch.*

At the Church Congress, the other week, the Rev. Dr. Hook told the following story:—One of his parishioners was earning 18s. a week, and 11s. of this he spent in drink. Dr. Hook went to him and asked him to abstain. "I will if you will" was the reply. The doctor replied that he would if his parishioner would. "What? leave off wine?"—"Yes." "And spirits?"—"Yea." "And beer?" "Yea." And the bargain was struck for six months. "But," said the man, "how shall I know that you have kept your word?"—"You

ask my missus and I will ask yours," replied the Vicar of Leeds. (Great laughter.) At the end of the half-year the man's wife went to the vicar and said her husband told her the time would be up next day, and that then he would have a good bout. Dr. Hook went to him again, and after much persuasion induced him to renew the arrangement for another six months. It did not require renewing after that; both have since remained total abstainers.

WHAT'S THE FASHION?

"What's the fashion, maiden, tell
What is proper for a belle?
What for head and form and fest,
What new style of mantle sweet?"

"You can tell as well as I,
Watching the ladies flutter by:
For a hat—a lily spray,
Tied on lest it blow away;
Shoes—with button and rosette;
Hair—entangled in a net;
Dress—with empire slope and train;
Mantle—without spot or stain:
These are fashions that will pass,
Like the dew-drop on the grass."
But other fashions still there be
That one can trust unfailingly.
There is a fashion old as Time,
Or Paradise in sinless prime,
To drink from Lethe's charmed cup,
And shut the body's windows up,
Leaving the warden spirit—where?
In God's own omnipresent care,
Till light and morning banish sleep,
And souls mount guard, Day's watch to keep.

It is the fashion, too, to love—
A fashion sent us from above,
Learned with a baby's cradled breath,
And unforgett'd after death.
Love all astray, and love untrue,
Love most unworthy of the skies;
Pure love a shivere saint might own,
True love in hovel, hall and throne;
The old, old, fashion, unforget,
Light of the saddest human lot.

It is the fashion to do wrong;
Alas, alas, how great the throng
Who follow up mad Folly's lead,
With such unthinking, reckless speed;
Catching at plumes from her torn wings,
Mistaking them for better things,
Wearing her tinsel till it turns
Black in the light which thrones-ward burns.

It is the fashion, too, to die;

To fold the hands and close the eye

On earth and each beloved one,

On gleaming star and glowing sun.

But oh! God's fashion meets us there,

One fashion that we all shall wear,

Where bending angels stoop to see

That fashion—Immortality.

E. L.

GEMS.

PROMISE little, think much, and do more.
He who becomes rich by living like a beggar is a beggar though he be rich.

Don't have too many friends. He who can't count his friends can't count upon them.

Silence is the safest response for all the contradiction that arises from impertinence, vulgarity, or envy.

TRUTHFULNESS is a corner-stone in character, and if not firmly laid in youth, there will ever after be a weak spot in the foundation.

THESE is an unfortunate disposition in man to attend much more to the faults of his companions which offend him than to their perfections which please him.

CLOUDS lie oftentimes between us and the sun. If we keep our eyes turned heavenward, we shall behold the glorious orb; but if our gaze be downward, we shall see only shadows lying on our path.

EVERYTHING which tends to discompose or agitate the mind, whether it be excessive sorrow, rage or fear, envy or revenge, love or despair—in short, whatever acts violently on our mental faculties tends to injure the health.

ZOUAVES AT THE SIEGE OF TUNIS.—The Zouaves are by no means a new creation. A corps boasting this redoubtable name existed three centuries ago. It appears that there were Zou-Zous at the siege of Tunis in 1572, as there were Spahis at the siege of

Corinth, according to Byron. Ruffino, the friend of Cervantes, relates that the militiamen who most distinguished themselves before Tunis were the Zoughi, or Zouaves, who were neither Turks nor Moors, but who followed the same religion. "They pretend that their ancestors were Christians, and had the forehead shorn, and a crescent tattooed on it. Nothing can withstand their impetuosity. When seen in the midst of a combat they resemble furious Huns. They wear a strange costume, and nothing can equal their agility and martial air; during the fight they are ferocious and implacable, but once the battle over they are generous towards the vanquished enemy. They support fatigues and long marches, thanks to never-ceasing gaiety, which is one of their characteristics." Ruffino's description might be well applied to the French Zouaves of to-day.

STATISTICS.

VALUE OF COAL EXPORTED.—The total value of the coal, culm, and cinder exported for the eight months ending August 31st this year was £3,955,652, as compared with £2,909,420. in the corresponding period of 1865, and £2,720,666. in the first eight months of 1864. Of these amounts miscellaneous parts of the world paid £1,193,564. in 1866, £1,028,948. in 1865, and £1,046,742. in 1864. The other leading consuming countries appear to have paid us the following sums for coal in the first eight months of the last three years: Russia, £23,477., against 190,581. and 179,637.; Sweden, 105,031., against 86,994. and 71,386.; Denmark, 223,640., against 202,428. and 161,702.; Prussia, 134,732., against 153,379. and 56,862.; the Hanse Towns, 201,241., against 176,788.; Holland, 75,784., against 72,869. and 70,615.; France, 581,223., against 477,792. and 398,021.; Spain, 266,246., against 163,558. and 200,809.; Italy, 115,689., against 83,728. and 97,909.; the United States, 62,095., against 70,714. and 37,245.; Brazil, 77,744., against 71,433. and 62,421.; and British India, 188,261., against 121,170. and 119,129. These figures show that France is still decidedly our largest coal customer.

MISCELLANEOUS.

TREES out in summer give lighter wood than when felled in winter time.

The first mulberry trees that were introduced into this country are now standing at Sion House.

MORE than 180,000 lb. of rough flax and hemp are used in the cordage of a first-rate man-of-war, including rigging and sails.

THE EXCESSIVE rains in the south of England have caused the production and growth of fungi to an enormous extent.

BELGIAN SHOES.—The wooden shoes worn by the peasants of both sexes in Belgium are purchased at from four to seven cents a pair, and never wear out.

It is a fact worthy of note that the land on the Dulwich College estate is worth more a yard in 1866 than it was an acre in 1619—the year the college was erected.

An issue of bank-notes of the value of half a scudi, a little more than two shillings, which has long since been talked of, has been officially pronounced in Rome.

A CENSUS has recently been taken of the canine species inhabiting Paris. This city possesses 46,987 dogs, 25,000 of which are pets, and 11,987 watch-dogs. This gives an average of one dog to every forty persons.

CRINOLINE STATISTICS.—One of the Paris papers gives the following:—A manufactory in Saxony has made during the last twelve years no less than 9,507,600 crinolines. For the fabrication of each of these crinolines there were required about 55 metres of springs, which give for the total manufacture 863,784,000 yards.

THE couple of rabbits introduced into Geelong, Australia, in 1859 have yielded 50,000 head for consumption. We pity the Australians, who may find they have got more than they bargained for ere long, and that in importing ten couple of rabbits they have conjured up a four-footed Frankenstein they won't readily be able to lay, to eat them out of house and home.

A DESCENDANT OF COLUMBUS.—A gentleman, writing from Rome, says that he has met the only living descendant of the discoverer of America. This M. Columbus is a genial gentleman of sixty, and has many interesting relics that belonged to his distinguished ancestor, two fine oil paintings of him among the rest. He has written the "Life of Christopher Columbus." He intends to visit America next year.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

INKEEPER.—Your county court will be your best remedy. *Loo G.*—Colour of hair light golden; very pretty, and you know it, "Loo."

HISTORIC.—George IV. (Regent) ascended the throne January 20, 1830.

D. A.—The average cost of making a hogshead of sugar on the island of Barbados is now about 91.

CURIOS.—1. The first stone of Vauxhall Bridge was laid May 9, 1811. 2. Southwark iron bridge was opened March 22, 1819.

EDWARD K. P., twenty-four, 5 ft. 7 in. in height, brown curly hair, considered good looking, and in a first-class business.

THOMAS.—The practice of hanging criminals in chains was abolished in the year 1825, it is said, by the desire of Adelais, Queen of William IV.

P. D. C., a professional, thirty, dark, middle height, and good looking, wishes to correspond with a lady. She must be dark and musical.

JONATHAN.—The civil list, voted by Parliament at the accession of the present Sovereign in 1837, was 365,000*l.* per annum.

KATE, a brunette, nineteen, middle stature, bright eyes, and good figure; no fortune, but thoroughly domesticated. Respondent must be dark and fond of home.

IRISHMAN.—It was in 1815 that a duel was fought between Daniel O'Connell and Mr. D'Estree; the latter was mortally wounded.

DANST, nineteen, 5 ft. 2 in., brown hair, gray eyes, fair, and domesticated. Respondent must not be less than twenty-two and not over forty.

J. H. DURE.—There is no royal road to success in literature. Write your story and submit it to an editor or publisher.

GRATTO, thirty, 6 ft. fair, respectfully connected, and military deportment. Respondent must be rather tall, fair, good looking, and domesticated.

ALBERT.—"Chi dice Donna dice Danno" is an Italian proverb, which, translated, means, "Who says woman says mischief."

OLIVER.—Dr. Woocott, under the assumed name of Peter Pindar, published satires, was born at Dodbrooke, in Devon, 1738, and practised as a physician at Truro.

KATE MAUD, eighteen, tall, dark hair and eyes, and will have 200*l.* a year when of age. Respondent must be a tall gentleman, either fair or dark, about twenty-two or three.

ANNIE, twenty, dark eyes and hair, respectable and industrious. Respondent must be a respectable mechanic or sailor about twenty-five or thirty.

W. W. (Glasgow), twenty-four, fair, considered good looking, in a good business that yields 150*l.* per annum. Respondent must be fair, good figure, and not more than twenty.

A LOVER OF FLOWERS.—The best time to plant the native water-lillies is from the middle of March to the middle of April; procure some roots with the soil attached, put them into water, and their weight will keep them down.

A LOVER OF LEARNING.—To become a proficient in history, study it perseveringly; begin with ancient history, proceeding gradually to the present time, reading every work you can possibly procure.

EDGAR.—The initials "E.C." is generally understood to mean "Before Christ," but, about 1807, session clerks used the same initials as a contraction for confirmation that the child was baptized before the congregation.

TRAVIS.—If you refer to the calendar at the beginning of the Church of England Prayer-Book you will obtain full directions for finding the "Dominical letter" for any year up to the present century.

S. T. G.—To make a delicious cup of tea, put the teapot with the tea in it into the oven, let it remain till hot, then add boiling water, and in a short time you will have better tea than that made in the ordinary way.

SIXTEEN.—Your handwriting is quite good enough for a merchant's office, but to judge of your mind from your letter, the sooner you obtain active employment the better it will be for you.

A. A.—Bills of Sale: A short Act of great importance was passed at the close of the last session, having been almost unnoticed in its progress through Parliament. It is the 29 and 30 Vict. c. 95, and is designed to amend the law relating to bills of sale. It enacts that the registration of a bill of sale must be renewed once in every five years, commencing from the day of the registration. If not so renewed, such registration shall cease to be of any effect at the expiration of any period of five years during which a renewal has not been made as therein required; subject to this provision, that where a period of five years from the original registration of any bill of sale has expired before the

1st January, 1867, such bill of sale shall be valid to all intents and purposes as it would have been if this Act had not passed, if before that day such registration be renewed. In other words, any bill of sale that has been registered for more than five years may be renewed by re-registration before the 1st January next. For the purpose of such renewal, an affidavit must be filed in the Master's office of the Court of Queen's Bench, stating the date of such bill of sale, and the names, residences, and occupations of the respective parties thereto as stated therein, and also the date of registration, and that such bill of sale is still a subsisting security, and such affidavit to have a *ss* stamp. The Act further directs that the masters shall keep one book in which all bills of sale and renewals shall be registered, and which may be searched on payment of a fee of one shilling for every search against one person, and office copies of affidavits are to be supplied for the same fee. Affidavits may be sworn before masters of the Queen's Bench. This important Act requires immediate attention.

ELIZABETH.—A good substitute for apple sauce is to boil a pint of molasses for about five-and-twenty minutes, then add three eggs, well beaten, hastily stirring them in, boil a little longer, and season with lemon and nutmeg.

BIRDIE, nineteen, a fascinating brunet, would be happy to correspond with any nice looking young gentleman who has a heart to let. "Birdie" is of a loving disposition, thoroughly domesticated, and fond of music and dancing.

VIVIAN.—The King of Rome, better known as the Duke de Reichstadt, was the son of Napoleon the Great, by an Austrian princess, and was born in 1811, and in the current history of France is styled Napoleon II.

SONG TO ITALY OR HER LATE TRIUMPH.

Oh, land of the beautiful,

Land of the brave,

Thou art free and united

From mountain to wave.

The Austrian's mora,

And trumpets are sounding

Thy paradise o'er—

Oh, land of the beautiful,

Land of the brave,

Thou art free and united

From mountain to wave!

Too soon is that music

Whilst still on the dome

Of St. Peter's a banner

Denies thee Old Rome!

It streams but a moment—

See, see how it fails,

And the trumpets keep sounding

A broad on the gales.

Oh, land of the beautiful,

Land of the brave,

Thou art free and united

From mountain to wave!

New wreaths for Renzi!

Emmanuel cries;

Garibaldi and glory!

Respond all the skies,

The chain, dungeon, despot,

Small mar thee no more;

The trumpets are sounding

Thy paradise o'er—

Oh, land of the beautiful,

Land of the brave,

Thou art free and united

From mountain to wave!

W. R. W.

NANNY S., thirty-four, medium height, and dark hair and eyes. Respondent must be about her own age or older, and in a prosperous business.

BACHELOR, thirty, rather tall, dark, moderately good looking, professional, comfortably off, and with fair prospects. Respondent must be well educated, accustomed to house-keeping, musical, and have some income or expectancy.

N. J.—The fruit, the cherry, derives its name from Cerasus, a city of Pontia. It was introduced into England by the Romans, but became extinct during the Saxon period. It was reintroduced by the gardener of Henry VIII., who brought it from Flanders.

EMILIE.—To obtain a good dish of potatoes readily, peel and cut some in slices about half an inch thick, cover them with boiling water, and boil till tender, skin, then, in proportion to the quantity, add flour, butter, pepper, and salt; according to taste.

HERRY, a pretty blonde, twenty-one, tall, graceful, good tempered, and very loving, wishes to correspond with a tall, dark gentleman, a little older than herself; he must be fond of home, and attentive. "Hetty" would not mind going abroad.

MARIAN.—A good remedy for keeping away moths is the following recipe: 1 oz. of gum camphor, and one of the powdered shell of red pepper, mixed in some strong alcohol for several days, and then strained; with this tincture sprinkle fur, or anything else you wish to preserve.

THANKFUL.—Providing you be efficient as a workman, and there be a vacancy, you will not require Parliamentary influence to obtain the situation you name. An application, with testimonials, will be enough; at the same time the recommendation of a Member of Parliament would materially serve you.

CANTATORE.—Some of the new songs certainly are not worth one moment's consideration; they are so stupid that one cannot resist throwing them aside and returning to our old favourites, Burns and Moore, with a feeling of relief and pleasure. What can be more beautiful than Moore's "Last Rose of Summer?"

GARSTON.—The terms "moralities," "miracle plays," and "mysteries," were applied to the religious and allegorical plays which constituted the drama of the middle ages. The terms are synonymous; the "miracles" were the earliest form; the "mysteries" were more elaborate and lengthened performances, representing various portions of sacred history.

W. H. P.—The real difference in the meaning of emperor and king is that the former is the sovereign over several kingdoms, as, for instance, the Emperors of Austria, Russia, Turkey, France, and England; while a king is simply the

ruler over one country—to wit, Saxony, Denmark, and until recently Prussia, which, like England, is now to all intents and purposes an empire, although still styled a kingdom.

LIZZIE and EMILY.—"Lizzie," fair hair, blue eyes, and fresh colour. "Emily," dark brown hair, and blue eyes; both fond of home, and thoroughly domesticated. Respondents must be dark, and about thirty.

POLLY.—1. The wife of Charles II. was Catherine of Braganza, and her dowry was the island of Bombay. 2. If "Polly," "Lucy," "Mary," "Maggie," and "Agnes," will write to us respectively, we will give our opinion of their handwriting. How foolish of "Polly" to ask our opinion without sending specimens!

VIVIAN, LEOPOLDE, and EDNA.—"Vivian" is twenty-two, 5 ft. chestnut hair, hazel eyes, and good tempered. "Leopold," twenty, medium height, black hair, and eyes. "Edna," nineteen, 5 ft. 4 in., light hair, gray eyes, fair, hasty tempered but forgiving. Respondents must be dark and tall.

R. T.—"Kate Travis" is really not fit for publication. A story, however short, should at least have a beginning, a middle, and an end, but "Kate Travis" possesses neither. "R. T." should remember that aspiration is not inspiration, and that the chief element of a tale is the having something to say, and to be able to say it.

FOUR young men in the Royal Navy—"A. D. C.," twenty-three, good looking, with a little money, and able to leave the navy. "W. G. P." petty officer, twenty-two, fair, and dark curly hair and whiskers. "E. F. E." twenty-one, 5 ft. 5 in. in height, brown hair, blue eyes, and good looking. "F. H." nineteen, 5 ft. 4 in. in height, black hair, blue eyes, and good looking.

HANDWRITING.—"Heartsease," not bad, but would be improved by practice—"An Old Subscriber, Manchester," very good—"Lotus," a few lessons from a good master would serve you.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

H. is responded to by—"Evergreen," twenty, rather below the medium height, dark hair, blue eyes, quiet and amiable disposition.

S. T. R. by—"J. T." seventeen, fair, good tempered, and being educated as a teacher. Her friends are highly respectable, but she has no money of present.

E. G. B. by—"Louisa C." 5 ft. in height, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, can play and sing well, and would make a good wife.

ARTHUR STANLEY by—"M. Staley," eighteen, medium height, fair, very loving, and fond of home; and—"L. H.," eighteen, tall, dark, considered nice looking, will come into a fortune at the death of an aunt.

LAGO by—"M. A." tall, dark, considered nice looking, will come into a fortune at the death of an aunt.

F. D. by—"A. M. J." eighteen, 5 ft. 1 1/2 in. in height, full blue eyes, fair hair, and good tempered; and—"H. H." nineteen, 4 ft. 6 in. in height, fair, light brown hair and eyes, passionately fond of music, affectionate, and thoroughly domesticated.

L. S. by—"Heartsease," who thinks he is the sort of gentleman she would like.

M. H. T. by—"Juliet Hilton," eighteen, 5 ft. 5 in., brown hair, hazel eyes, domestic, and very fond of music.

F. C. B. by—"May," a tradesman's daughter, nearly thirty-four, fair; the comforts of a good home have always had more charms for her than gay society.

WILL by—"Milly," nineteen, medium height, hazel eyes, golden hair, very pretty, a loving disposition, and very fond of home; and—"Candour," nineteen, rather tall, good figure, fair complexion, and not bad looking, not accomplished but thoroughly domesticated, and a good temper.

LIZZIE T. by—"Dexter."

KATE by—"Eiscara," tall, fair, of good family, and very domesticated.

N. B. by—"Tebor," twenty-three, in receipt of 100*l.* per annum, and good expectations, will willingly exchange letters.

PORTIA by—"P. K." twenty-five, medium height, good appearance, dark, and fond of home, is sure he could make a wife happy, and will have 100*l.* in six months.

LILY by—"Percy," twenty-six, tall, dark, moderately good looking, and in a profession with fair prospects.

A. H. by—"G. H. N." good looking, is kind and affectionate, would make a good husband, has travelled a great deal, and would now like to settle down.

GEN. MAY FERD by—"Willy," twenty, who thinks he could make her happy and comfortable.

STANHOPE by—"Eco Homo," who thinks she would be suitable to his taste. "Stanhope" is not a proficient in music, but is on the road to it. He is 5 ft. 10 in. in height, good looking, sandy hair, and is very sociable.

SUSIE by—"Albany Seymour," who describes himself as a jolly, rollicking Irishman. "Albany" is twenty-six, with fair hair and laughing blue eyes, is a draper, with 120*l.* per annum, and a fair prospect of an increase. If "Susie" approves this description, and has no objection to reside in "old Ireland," will she be kind enough to forward her cards, which, if not approved of, will be returned?

M. W. THE BLOONIE, by—"B. B." twenty-four, tall, dark, good circumstances, with a fond and loving heart, and tired of single life—"Zebra," who thinks she will make a good wife. "Zebra" has been in business for himself, but has given it up for want of a partner; would like to know the age of "M. W." "Zebra" is twenty-five, 5 ft. 4 in. in height, fair, and fair; and—"J. L." twenty-one, 5 ft. 8 in. in height, fair, in a good position, and in a business of his own.

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